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ABSTRACT

The results of the 1979-80 reading and literature assessment conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) are contained in this report. In addition to the national results, the report describes the performance of 9-, 13-, and 17-year-old students in various cohorts defined by geographic region, sex, race/ethnicity, parental education, and size and type of community. The primary focus of the report is upon the written responses of students to works of literature when they were asked to analyze them, defend their initial reactions to the works, evaluate works, or simply respond to them in any way they deemed appropriate. In addition, the report provides information about the students' reading habits and attitudes, as well as their knowledge of literary works, characters, and conventions. The findings presented in the report indicate (1) that most students lacked systematic strategies for examining what they read in order to understand it fully, and (2) that although students could make sound initial responses to works, they did not appear to know how to support or explain their responses in any but the most superficial ways. The report discusses the implications of the findings and suggests that school administrators and teachers take a variety of steps to address the problems raised by them. Primary type of information provided by report: Results (Selective) (Change). (FL)

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Reading, Thinking and Writing

Results From the 1979-80 National Assessment of Reading and Literature

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Reading, Thinking and Writing:

Results From the 1979-80 National Assessment of Reading and Literature

Report No. 11-L-01

by the
National Assessment of Educational Progress

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FOREWORD

When the U.S. Office of Education was chartered in 1867, one charge to its commissioners was to determine the nation's progress in education. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) was initiated a century later to address, in a systematic way, that charge.

Since 1969, the National Assessment has gathered information about levels of educational achievement across the country and reported its findings to the nation. It has surveyed the attainments of 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds and adults in art, career and occupational development, citizenship, literature, mathematics, music, reading, science, social studies and writing. All areas have been periodically reassessed in order to detect any important changes. To date, National Assessment has interviewed and tested nearly 1,000,000 young Americans.

Learning-area assessments evolve from a consensus process. Each assessment is the product of several years of work by a great many educators, scholars and lay persons from all over the nation. Initially, these people design objectives for each subject area, proposing general goals they feel Americans should be achieving in the course of their education. After careful review, these objectives are given to writers, whose task is to create exercises (items) appropriate to the objectives.

When the exercises have passed extensive reviews by subject-area specialists, measurement experts and lay persons, they are administered to probability samples. The people in these samples are selected in such a way that the results of their assessment can be generalized to an entire national population. That is, on the basis of the performance of about 2,500 9-year-olds on a given exercise, we can make generalizations about the probable performance of all 9-year-olds in the nation.

After assessment data have been collected, scored and analyzed, the National Assessment publishes reports and disseminates the results as widely as possible. Not all exercises are released for publication. Because NAEP will readminister some of the same exercises in the future to determine whether the performance levels of Americans have increased, remained stable or decreased, it is essential that they not be released in order to preserve the integrity of the study.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Assessing reading and literature performance of young Americans throughout the nation is an undertaking of major proportions. Certainly it could not have become a reality without substantial contributions by many people, not the least of whom are the students, teachers and administrators who cooperated so generously.

Special thanks are due to the dozens of consultants — both subject-area specialists and lay persons — who reviewed the materials used in the reading and literature assessments under the general guidance of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) staff. Particular acknowledgment is given to Carita Chapman, Bureau of Reading Improvement, Chicago, Illinois; Charles Cooper, University of California at San Diego; Anthony Petrosky, University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Beverly Roller, Jefferson County Public Schools, WheatRidge, Colorado; Robert Schreiner, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; and Dorothy Strickland, Columbia University, New York, New York, all of whom provided special assistance in several areas of the assessment.

Our gratitude is also extended to the Reading/Literature Advisory Committee (see Appendix A) and other subject-area experts who participated in advisory and interpretive conferences for the several reading assessments. The staff at NAEP appreciates the insights provided by these distinguished education and subject-area specialists.

Administration of exercises was handled by the Research Triangle Institute. Scoring and processing were performed by the Westinghouse DataScore Systems (formerly the Measurement Research Center), Iowa City, Iowa, and by the National Assessment staff. Dan Duse and Donna Benson deserve special credit for their excellent work in supervising and processing the scoring of open-ended exercises.

Every assessment is the result of a collaborative effort by the National Assessment staff. Many persons contributed to the reading assessments. Special thanks are extended to Nancy Mead for development and analysis; Michael Noe for development, analysis and scoring; Rex Brown for development and editorial supervision; Kay Barrow for technical planning and analysis; Ina Mullis for scoring and technical guidance; Donald Searls for sampling and analysis guidance; Dunlap Scott for coordinating data collection; John Kalk, Suzie Sullivan and Gwen Edwards for data processing support; Ava Powell for technical support; and Marci Reser and Deborah Houy for report production. The report was written by Arthur Applebee, Kay Barrow, Rexford Brown, Charles Cooper, Ina Mullis and Anthony Petrosky.

Roy H. Forbes
Director

INTRODUCTION

Why This Title?

This report on students' academic performance looks beyond the boundaries traditionally ascribed to subject areas. It rests upon the assumption that in order to understand how well people read, we must look at their ability to read a range of materials and to express and explain their interpretations of what they have read. Accordingly, the national assessment of reading and literature employed a variety of techniques to examine students' ability to comprehend what they have read, including some tasks that asked for relatively extended discussion of text material. The model on which the report is based implies that initial comprehension of a passage can be expanded and refined through reflection and interpretation, and that this in turn leads to a better understanding of the material itself.

Besides giving us the opportunity to discuss reading and literature in the larger context of literacy—thinking, responding and writing—this integrated perspective provides the opportunity to contrast students' performance on a range of multiple-choice and open-ended tasks, as well as to examine the extent to which students' performance is influenced by the characteristics of texts they are reading. Much of the material on which items in this report are based is literary in nature, though the passages are drawn from a variety of genres, including fictional as well as nonfictional texts. We believe that the reading, thinking and writing skills drawn upon in these exercises are equally important in all subject-area reading tasks. The literary selections chosen for examination here allow us to assess relatively complex interpretive and analytic skills without requiring the specialized knowledge and vocabulary of particular subject-area fields.

When reading is divorced from the process of discussing the meaning of a work (as it often is in teaching and testing), comprehension can be misunderstood to be a sudden "click" of meaning measurable only through short-answer and multiple-choice questions that require little struggle for full understanding. If tasks that require students to explain and substantiate their judgments and interpretations are relegated solely to literature classes rather than to the wide variety of situations in which students must construct meaning from texts, then the complex skills involved in such tasks can mistakenly be excluded from reading instruction. In fact, **reading** as traditionally assessed through objective tests of "comprehension" and **responding** as traditionally measured through open-ended writing tasks are aspects of the same phenomenon of human understanding. They are aspects of learning that work more productively in tandem than either does separately.

Many of the specialists who designed the reading/literature assessment believe it is time for these aspects of reading to be put in relation to each other to create a more detailed and complete picture of what students are and are not learning to do in their reading and literature classes. This report represents an attempt to move in that direction.

The Data Base

The National Assessment of Educational Progress first assessed reading and literature achievement in separate assessments during the 1970-71 school year. Since that time, reading has been assessed twice as a discrete learning area (1974-75 and 1979-80) and reading and literature have been combined for a joint assessment in 1979-80. Each assessment surveyed the achievement and attitudes of American 9-, 13- and 17-year-olds, using a deeply stratified, multistage probability sample design.

To measure changes in reading performance between 1970-71, 1974-75 and 1979-80, approximately half of the exercises assessed in the first assessment were reassessed in the second and third under almost identical administrative conditions. To measure the status of reading/literature achievement in 1979-80, National Assessment consultants developed new objectives and developed additional exercises to provide coverage of the new objectives. Some 1970-71 literature items were also reassessed.

Approximately 29,000 9-year-olds, 41,000 13-year-olds and 36,000 17-year-olds participated in the 1979-80 reading assessment. Because National Assessment reports results for groups of students, not individuals, it is not necessary for each student to respond to every item (exercise),[1]

Each respondent completed only one item booklet of about 45 minutes in length. Between 2,500 and 2,900 students responded to each booklet. In 1979-80 there were 11 exercise booklets for 9-year-olds, 15 booklets for 13-year-olds and 14 booklets for 17-year-olds.

The exercises for each assessment were administered by a professional data collection staff to minimize the burden on participating schools and to maximize uniformity of assessment conditions. Instructions were recorded on a paced audio tape and played back to students to ensure that all students moved through the packages at the same speed.

Multiple-choice items were scored by an optical scanning machine; open-ended items were hand-scored by trained scorers using scoring guides developed to define categories of acceptable and unacceptable responses.

National Assessment reports estimated percentages of correct responses for single items. When a report indicates that "85% of the 17-year-olds gave a correct response," it means that an estimated 85% of the 17-year-olds would have given the correct response if all the 17-year-olds in schools across the country had been assessed. In addition to reporting national results, National Assessment provides data on the performance of various population subgroups within the national population, defined by sex, race, region of the country, size and type of community lived in and level of parental education. National Assessment also aggregates percentages of success on various sets of items to provide data on changes in performance between assessments and on the differential performance of population subgroups.

Definitions of the reporting groups follow:

Region

The country has been divided into four regions: Northeast, Southeast, Central and West. States included in each region are shown on the following map.

[1]National Assessment uses the term "exercise" to mean an assessment item. The terms "exercise" and "item" are used interchangeably in this report.

Sex

Results are reported for males and females.

Race/Ethnicity

Results are presented for blacks, whites and, in 1979-80 only, Hispanos.

Level of Parental Education

National Assessment defines three categories of parental-education levels, based on students' reports. These categories are: (1) those whose parents did not graduate from high school, (2) those who have at least one parent who graduated from high school and (3) those who have at least one parent who has had some post-high-school education.

Type of Community

Three extreme community types of special interest are defined by an occupational profile of the area served by a school as well as by the size of the community in which the school is located. This is the only reporting category that excludes a large number of respondents. About two-thirds do not fall into the classifications listed below. Results for the remaining two-thirds are not reported since their performance was similar to that of the nation.

Advantaged-urban (high-metro) communities. Students in this group attend schools in or around cities having a population greater than 200,000 where a high proportion of the residents are in professional or managerial positions.

Disadvantaged-urban (low-metro) communities. Students in this group attend schools in or around cities having a population greater than 200,000 where a high proportion of the residents are on welfare or are not regularly employed.

Rural communities. Students in this group attend schools in areas with a population under 10,000 where many of the residents are farmers or farm workers.

Size of Community

Big cities. Students in this group attend schools within the city limits of cities having a 1970 census population over 200,000.

Fringes around big cities. Students in this group attend schools within metropolitan areas (1970 U.S. Bureau of the Census urbanized areas) served by cities having a population greater than 200,000 but outside the city limits.

Medium cities. Students in this group attend schools in cities having a population between 25,000 and 200,000 not classified in the fringes-around-big-cities category.

Small places. Students in this group attend schools in communities having a population less than 25,000, not classified in the fringes-around-big-cities category.

Scoring

Scoring and computer recording of data were contracted to Westinghouse DataScore Systems (formerly the Measurement Research Center), Iowa City, Iowa, for all three reading and both literature assessments.

In the 1979-80 assessment, more than 90% of the items were multiple-choice and the rest were open-ended. Responses to multiple-choice exercises were read directly by an optical scanning machine. The scoring contractor employed a special staff to hand score open-ended exercises. Scorers were responsible for categorizing open-ended responses, using scoring guides that defined

categories of acceptable and unacceptable responses. They then coded this information into ovals that could be read by the optical scanning machine.

For changes in performance to be measured accurately, scoring had to be the same for responses collected in each assessment year. For multiple-choice items, the same responses were scored correct in each year. Some open-ended items were short-answer reading items requiring objective scoring of a clerical nature. These were all reassessed items, and identical guides were used in 1979-80 as were used to categorize the 1970-71 and 1974-75 responses. Scorers were trained using sample responses from all three assessment years. Quality-control procedures were conducted by having scorers rescore papers from previous assessments along with the 1979-80 responses. A 5% subsample from each previous assessment was rescored, and percentages of agreement with the earlier scorings averaged approximately 99%.

Most of the open-ended scoring effort was concentrated on a variety of exercises that required at least paragraph length written responses to poems and prose passages. Most of these items were developed for the 1979-80 assessment, although a few were 1970-71 literature items readministered to measure changes in performance. Scoring guides for these newly developed items were constructed using both "field tryout" (a preliminary assessment to check the accuracy and effectiveness of items) data and actual assessment data. Scoring guides for the few reassessed items were developed in 1979-80, using both 1970-71 and 1979-80 assessment responses, to be consistent with the guides constructed for items first administered in 1979-80. To ensure that scoring of the two sets of assessment data was identical, all 1970-71 responses to open-ended literature items were rescored at the same time that the 1979-80 responses were scored.

Although the use of a variety of types of tasks and scoring guides increases the expense and complexity of the open-ended scoring task, it nevertheless provides a more comprehensive means of assessing students' abilities to respond to written works. Five different types of open-ended exercises were included in the 1979-80 assessment of "response to written works." Each required different skills and levels of ability on the part of the respondents and therefore required a different scoring procedure. Each type of responding task and scoring procedure is discussed briefly below and explained fully in this report and its appendicular materials.

General responding tasks asked respondents to discuss the passage or poem presented, or to describe their thoughts or feelings about the text. It was expected that responses to this type of item would be highly text-dependent and would allow the writer to select from a variety of perspectives. The writer was given very little explicit focus for his/her response, and was therefore free to choose whichever approach seemed most natural. The scoring guide categories for this type of exercise are descriptive and do not readily lend themselves to quantitative ranking. The response categories scored were: egocentric, personal, emotional, retelling, inferencing, generalization, analysis, reference to other works and evaluation. At age 17 only, three of these categories were further divided into two levels each to provide more qualitative information: analysis (level 1 = superficial, level 2 = elaborated); other works (level 1 = general, level 2 = specific); and personal (level 1 = global, level 2 = analytic).

A second type of open-ended exercise is referred to as **inferencing**, and **inferencing tasks** required either general or specific inferences relating to the mood of, or a character in, the passage. Respondents were asked to describe the intent of the author, to describe the mood of the passage or to describe the character of the protagonist. These kinds of items required the reader to interpret the passage and to explain the interpretation by relating it to the text.

Qualitative differences in score points were dependent upon the identification of the intent, mood or character traits and upon the amount and nature of the supporting evidence provided. In addition, descriptive data were obtained concerning the source of the evidence—whether it related to the content or form of the text or whether it represented a subjective reaction on the part of the reader—and the number of pieces of evidence provided by the writer.

Emotional responding tasks asked respondents to describe emotions or feelings aroused by the text. The scoring guide categorized both the identification of the emotion (or feeling) and the presentation of evidence supporting the emotion. Qualitative ranks were assigned and, again, additional descriptive information was obtained.

Analytic responding tasks asked the respondents to analyze a passage or poem. Successful responses were those that went beyond a superficial interpretation and provided a theme or meaning for the text. In addition, it was necessary that the respondents discuss the way in which some feature(s) of the text contributes to the statement of the theme. These responses received only qualitative-rank scores. No further descriptive information was obtained.

The final type of open-ended exercise, **evaluative responding tasks**, asked students to evaluate particular poems or stories. Scoring guides for these exercises measured the respondents' abilities to state their criteria, and where appropriate, to provide examples from the text that are related to the criteria. Qualitative ranks were assigned to the various response types, and descriptive information was also assessed.

Westinghouse DataScore Systems and National Assessment staff worked together to train readers. In training sessions, readers were given the scoring guide for an item and responses that exemplified each scoring category. The reasons why responses were classified in particular categories were discussed; scorers' questions were answered, and, if necessary, modifications were made to scoring guides. Readers then scored several papers and categorizations were discussed. This process continued until readers were familiar with the application of the scoring guides and was repeated for each task and separate age group assessed to be sure that scoring was consistent.

To further ensure the quality and consistency of scoring open-ended exercises, quality-control checks were conducted during the scoring of these exercises. At regular intervals, randomly selected responses were drawn from the total pool of responses for an item and read by randomly selected scorers. Both the responses and the scorers were selected without replacement; approximately 10% of the responses were included in the quality-control check. Scores for the quality-control readers were recorded, and the responses selected for quality control were then put back into the total pool of responses to be scored during the regular course of scoring. Following scoring of all responses, the two scores for quality-control responses were compared. If discrepancies in scoring became apparent, scorers were retrained and, on some occasions, work was rescored.

Percentages of agreement between quality-control and regular scoring were computed for each open-ended exercise. These data are summarized in Appendix B.

Measures of Achievement

The basic measure of achievement reported by National Assessment is the percentage of respondents answering a given item acceptably. This percentage is an estimate of the percentage of 9-, 13- or 17-year-olds who would respond acceptably to a given item if every 9-, 13- or 17-year-old in the country were assessed.

In addition to providing results on individual items, National Assessment reports the average performance across groups of similar items—for the learning area as a whole, for a particular theme, objective or subobjective, and so on. These results constitute the mean, or arithmetic average, of the estimates of performance on the group of items and are called the mean percentage correct.

The items included in the calculation of a mean percentage usually are located in several exercise booklets and, thus, the mean percentage should not be construed as an average test score.

To present a general picture of changes in achievement, National Assessment describes the gains or losses on a group of exercises in terms of the differences in the average percentage of acceptable responses.

Unless the items summarized in the mean percentages of acceptable responses are identical, the means of one age group should not be compared with the means of another because their values reflect both the choice of exercises and the performance of the students. When only a few exercises are summarized by a mean, one should be especially cautious in interpreting results, since a small set of exercises might not adequately cover the wide range of potential behaviors included under a given objective or subobjective. The mean should be interpreted literally as the arithmetic average of the percentage of acceptable responses obtained from National Assessment samples on a specific set of exercises. It should not be construed as an average test score.

The differences between percentages or averages for a reporting group and that of the entire age group (nation) on an exercise are used to describe the performance of any reporting group relative to the entire age group. This difference is a positive number if the group achieved a higher percentage or average than the entire age group and is a negative number if the group achieved a lower percentage or average. For example, a group performance of +1.8% indicates that the percentage of responses for the group is 1.8 percentage points higher than the national percentage of responses for that age level.

Estimating Variability in Achievement Measures

National Assessment uses a national probability sample at each age level to estimate the proportion of people who would complete an exercise in a particular way. The sample selected was one of a large number of all possible samples of the same size that could have been selected using the same sample design. Since an achievement measure computed from each of the possible samples would differ from one sample to another, the standard error of this statistic was used as a measure of the sampling variability among achievement measures from all possible samples. A standard error, based on one particular sample, serves to estimate that sampling variability.

National Assessment has adhered to a standard convention whereby differences between statistics are designated as statistically significant at the .05 level of significance. That is, differences in performance between assessment years or between a reporting group and the nation are highlighted with asterisks **only** if they are at least twice as large as their standard error. Differences this large would occur by chance in fewer than 5% of all possible replications of our sampling and data collection procedures for any particular reporting group or national estimates.

Organization of This Report

The five chapters of this report are designed to both highlight findings and present detailed discussions of specific items. Each chapter begins with a brief discussion of the cluster of items designed to assess a specific objective and then moves to highlights of the results for that objective. Detailed findings are then reported by item and age. Finally, each chapter, except the last one on general responding, ends with conclusions that summarize the findings in the context of implications for teaching and learning.

The first chapter of the report begins by presenting a summary of the overall findings for the assessment and then moves to a brief but pointed discussion of implications for American schooling. Chapter 2, "Reading Habits, Interests and Attitudes," presents the results of self-report questions designed to find out such things as where reading fits into students' priorities, how often students read and what they know about their literary heritage. In addition, the chapter includes information about students' literary knowledge and skills and how they have changed since 1970. Chapter 3, "Explaining Responses to Written Works," examines how well students performed on tasks that asked them to explain and substantiate their interpretations of texts. Chapter 4, "Evaluating Written Works," reports on students' abilities to evaluate written works against criteria. Chapter 5, "General Responding," presents the results of what we have learned about achievement in literature from the unstructured written responses of 13- and 17-year-olds. Appendix A lists members of the Reading/Literature Advisory Committee; Appendix B contains scorers' agreement percentages; Appendix C includes examples of items along with their scoring guides.

A Note About Interpretations and Value Judgments

Unlike other National Assessment reports that limit interpretive remarks to a particular chapter, this report includes interpretive remarks and value judgments throughout, due to the nature of the material. These comments represent the best judgments of the authors — Arthur Applebee, Kay Barrow, Rexford Brown, Charles Cooper, Ina Mullis and Anthony Petrosky — who are solely responsible for them. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the Education Commission of the States or the National Institute of Education.

CHAPTER 1

Summary and Implications

The 1979-80 assessment of reading and literature was designed to provide a broad portrait of students' reading skills and attitudes toward reading. Many different formats, passage types and levels of difficulty were deliberately included to assess the extent to which such variations might influence students' performance.

The chart following highlights some of the major findings discussed in this report.

What Students Can Do	Countervailing Tendencies
1. Almost all students recognized the value and utility of reading.	1. Teenagers read little for their own enjoyment, spent more time watching television than they spent reading, did not read for long periods of time and preferred movies to books.
2. By age 17, most read a range of materials appropriate for their age level.	2. About 10% remained unable to read even simple materials.
3. Older students displayed stronger comprehension skills and were more versatile in writing about what they read than were younger students.	3. Older students displayed less commitment to reading than did younger students.
4. By age 17, most students expressed their **initial** ideas and judgments about what they read, particularly when these involved personal reactions.	4. Very few students at any age **explained** their initial ideas and judgments through reference either to the text or to their own feelings and opinions.
5. Older students provided more evidence to support their assertions than younger students.	5. The evidence cited by older students does not reflect effective strategies for approaching a text; explanations remained superficial and limited. The overwhelming majority of students lacked strategies for analyzing or evaluating in the interest of deepening their understanding of what they read.

The most significant finding from this assessment is that while students learn to read a wide range of material, they develop very few skills for examining the nature of the ideas that they take away from their reading. Though most have learned to make simple inferences about such things as a character's behavior and motivation, for example, and could express their own judgments of a work as "good" or "bad," they generally did not return to the passage to explain the interpretations they made.

In interpreting the results, we worked from a four-step model of the process through which comprehension would evolve. These four steps are:

1. Initial comprehension, leading to
2. Preliminary interpretations, followed by
3. A reexamination of the text in light of these interpretations, leading to
4. Extended and documented interpretation.

Looking at the results across a wide range of items and tasks, our major conclusion is that American schools have been reasonably successful in teaching the majority of students to complete the first two steps of this model, but have failed to teach more than 5 to 10% to move beyond their initial reading of a text. Students seem satisfied with their initial interpretations of what they have read and seem genuinely puzzled at requests to explain or defend their points of view. As a result, responses to assessment items requiring explanations of criteria, analysis of text or defense of a judgment or point of view were in general disappointing. Few students could provide more than superficial responses to such tasks, and even the "better" responses showed little evidence of well-developed problem-solving strategies or critical-thinking skills.

These findings seem to us a direct reflection of current emphases in testing and instruction. In the classroom, teachers following traditional patterns of whole-class teaching and recitation move quickly from student to student so that many students can be involved without any one student dominating. The result is a pattern of teacher-dominated questioning in which brief comments from individual students are solicited and extended discussion is deliberately curtailed. Such techniques can be very effective in conveying an approved or conventional understanding of a difficult passage, but give individual students little opportunity to learn to formulate extended and detailed interpretations.

The relatively short responses encouraged in classroom discussion parallel the multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank formats that dominate standardized and teacher-developed tests. When doing well in most school contexts requires little beyond short responses, it is not surprising that students fail to develop more comprehensive thinking and analytic skills.

More encouragingly, a large proportion of the students seem to be ready to learn how to explain and defend their initial interpretations, and through that process, to move to a better understanding of the passage they are reading. By age 17, most of the students assessed are able to answer multiple-choice questions requiring either literal or inferential skills. Most are also able to summarize passages and demonstrate the mechanical and grammatical writing skills they would need if they learned how to write more extended answers.

What the majority seem to lack is experience in undertaking such explanatory tasks and the problem-solving strategies and critical-thinking skills that would develop through such experience. They do not appear to have learned how to look for evidence for their judgments, whether by systematically analyzing some aspect of the passage or by referring to their own ideas and value systems. In examining students' responses to various items, we looked for a number of fairly straightforward strategies that students could

have used in answering the questions. These included such techniques as approaching a passage paragraph by paragraph (or stanza by stanza); focusing on one formal element at a time (e.g., imagery, theme); examining how the different sections interact around one "main idea"; applying external frameworks for making sense of the passage (e.g., literary history or psychology); or comparing the passage with other works.

We were not looking for "correct" approaches to particular passages; rather, we assumed that such systematic strategies would offer students alternative ways to organize their explanations. What we discovered, however, was that students appear to have few strategies for approaching these tasks, relying at best upon a list-like citation of separate and unrelated bits of evidence for their opinions. Given the extent to which 17-year-olds were successful in formulating initial judgments and interpretations, we feel that with some guidance in how to approach these tasks (and with better motivation), a relatively high proportion could achieve more adequate comprehension of the passages they read.

Other Findings

A number of other threads that run throughout the results are worth highlighting.

- The nature of a particular passage has a strong shaping influence on the characteristics of students' responses. Passages that interest or engage readers lead to fuller, more elaborate discussion. Passages that are particularly difficult lead to synopsis or summarization, as readers grope for any meaning at all. Other passages drive readers toward evaluation, interpretation or personal associations.

- Item formats also have a major influence on students' performance. Performance on multiple-choice and short-answer items shows that by age 17 the majority of students were able to make accurate initial inferences about the passages they read. On the other hand, responses to open-ended items on the same and similar passages highlight the limited nature of these comprehensive skills and make clear students' inabilities to elaborate upon the meanings derived from particular passages. Either item type alone would have provided only a limited portrait of students' achievement.

- In general, students were better at discussing their personal reactions to a passage then they were at analyzing the passage itself. By age 17, the majority were capable of describing the feelings or emotions aroused by a passage, though they still had difficulty discussing mood, character or theme. Students focused their comments upon the content or "action" of a passage, rather than discussed aspects of form.

- Response patterns of 13- and 17-year-olds were similar in type and quality, with this exception: the younger teenagers were far more likely to make evaluative judgments about what they read. These judgments were seldom explained or supported at either age.

- Between 1970 and 1980, both 13- and 17-year-olds became less likely to try to interpret what they read and more likely to simply make unexplained value judgments about it. One way of characterizing the change during the seventies is to say that 17-year-olds' papers became somewhat more like 13-year-olds' papers.

- Across tasks, girls read better than boys, and were also more successful in explaining their judgments.

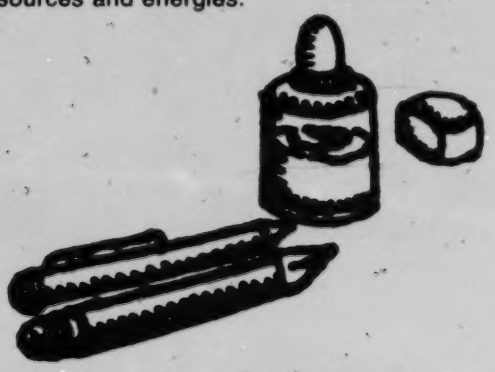
- As in virtually all areas assessed by National Assessment, disadvantaged-urban students performed below national averages, while advantaged-urban students performed above national averages.

What Can Be Done...

The results summarized in this report suggest that American schools have been successful at teaching students to formulate **quick** and **short** interpretations, but have not yet developed in students the skills they need to explain and defend the judgments they make. The end result is an emphasis on shallow and superficial opinions at the expense of reasoned and disciplined thought.

If this emphasis is inappropriate — and we believe that it is — some restructuring of objectives and activities will be necessary in school programs. In particular, more situations must be created that require students to explain and defend their opinions at some length. Ideally, this would include both discussion activities, in which students have to contend with the immediate demands of an audience, and extensive writing, in which longer segments of text must be organized and related to one another.

Neither suggestion is radical or unusual, but both require a realignment of resources and energies that may be difficult during a time when economic pressures are leading to increases in class sizes and in other aspects of teachers' workloads. The suggestions that follow assume the vital importance of critical thinking, reading and writing skills and seek to foster them within the constraints of finite resources and energies.



...by School Administrators

If students are to learn to engage in the kinds of extended inquiry and careful examination of evidence and opinions required in this assessment, the school administration must create an environment in which such inquiry is possible and valued. There are a number of aspects of the program that should be examined.

- **The testing program.** Tests are a direct reflection of what is valued by the school. If teacher-made tests, as well as standardized examinations, rely exclusively on short-answer formats, the message will be clear to teachers and students alike. Essay questions that require students to explain their points of view should be a regular part of any testing program.

- **Writing in the subject areas.** The kinds of reading, writing and thinking skills stressed in this assessment are relevant in all areas of the curriculum. Teachers of all subject areas should be encouraged to include writing tasks as part of their courses, not to teach "writing" but to further learning of subject-area concepts. If writing is relegated only to the English class, it may seem of little importance to most students.

- **Systematic writing instruction.** In addition to being required to explain their ideas and interpretations in a variety of subject areas, students need to be shown a variety of problem-solving and critical-thinking strategies. Instruction in such skills should be systematic rather than accidental, as part of the curriculum in English.

- **Institutional support for teachers.** Incorporating new writing and discussion tasks into the curriculum is time consuming, both in planning new activities and in reading the papers that result. Lower class sizes, released time or the provision of aides can help teachers manage the extra load.

- **Inservice training.** Most teachers have had no systematic training in the teaching of writing and thinking skills. The inservice program should provide opportunities for work in this area, for teachers of English as well as of other subjects.

...by Teachers

The results of this assessment of reading, thinking and writing skills suggest that in many schools, instructional activities overemphasize immediate and sometimes superficial interpretations at the expense of more extended explanations and analyses. Various aspects of the instructional program need to be examined:

- **Discussion periods.** Does the pattern of discussion allow individual students to state and defend their opinions? Or is the emphasis on developing a shared understanding under the teacher's guidance and direction? Small-group discussion may be needed to provide each student with opportunities to state and defend interpretations and opinions without using disproportionate amounts of class time.

- **Writing activities.** Do students have regular opportunities to write at some length? Or does most written work focus on relatively short responses to study questions or worksheets? Students at all ages can be asked to explain their judgments, though over the course of the school program the emphasis may shift from explaining personal reactions toward more formal analysis of texts and their meanings.

- **Problem-solving strategies.** Do students have an opportunity to learn a variety of ways of analyzing a text in order to find evidence for their judgments? The most consistent weakness found in the present assessment centered on students' apparent lack of systematic approaches to such tasks. In order to overcome this weakness, they need instruction in alternative approaches and practice in applying these alternatives in response to different texts and questions.

- **Textbooks.** What kinds of reading, thinking and writing skills are stressed by the textbooks you are using? Can students working with the study questions provided stop after stating an initial opinion? Or do they have to find and organize evidence in support of what they have said or written?

In Conclusion

Many students believe they will emerge from school into an electronic world that will require little reading and less writing. Nothing could be further from the truth. Postsecondary education, whether academic or vocational, requires careful reading and strong skills in analysis, interpretation and explanation. America's work world, in which the "information business" is the fastest growing sector of the economy, also requires those skills. In a world overloaded with information, both a business and a personal advantage will go to those individuals who can sort the wheat from the chaff, the important information from the trivial. Skills in reducing data, interpreting it, packaging it effectively, documenting decisions, explaining complex matters in simple terms and persuading are already highly prized in business, education and the military and will become more so as the information explosion continues. They will also be increasingly important at personal and social levels. Quality of life is directly tied to our ability to think clearly amid the noise of modern life, to sift through all that competes for our attention until we find what we value, what will make our lives worth living. What we value is seldom on the surface and, when it is found, can seldom be defended from the incursions of the trivial without sustained efforts to understand it more deeply, to clarify its nature and to explain it to ourselves and others. A society of individuals equipped to do this and aware of the values their forebears have left for them in their literature need not fear the future. A society in which the habits of disciplined reading, analysis, interpretation and discourse are not sufficiently cultivated has much to fear.

America's experiment in mass education has led to remarkable accomplishments, of which we all can be justly proud. However, the demands of the immediate future upon the technical, thinking, valuing and explanatory skills of this generation are such that we must challenge our educational system to move beyond its already considerable achievements. We hope that the discussion in the following pages will represent a useful step toward defining that challenge.

CHAPTER 2

Reading Habits, Interests and Attitudes

How well do America's students read? This report, in its entirety, represents an attempt to answer that often asked question, especially with respect to relatively complex kinds of reading material. But before detailing students' achievement in this area, it might be useful to review students' reading habits, tastes and attitudes toward written works in order to establish a context for their performance. Where does reading fit into their priorities? How often do they read? What kinds of material do they prefer? What do they know about their literary heritage? What do they know about the terms and strategies used for understanding complex reading materials such as works of literature?

A substantial part of the 1979-80 reading/literature assessment was devoted to answering such questions. What follows is a synopsis of the results of those survey questions.

How Much Do They Value Reading?

When asked "How important is it to be able to read?" over 95% of the students at each age said "very important."

However, when asked "How much do you enjoy reading?" they were less positive:

How Much Do You Enjoy Reading? 1979-80*

	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17
Very much	80.9%	49.8%	42.4%
Somewhat	15.2	45.3	52.0
Not at all	3.2	4.6	5.3

*Columns may not total 100% due to rounding.

Not only were fewer willing to choose the most positive response, but the percentages saying "very much" shrank considerably between ages 9 and 13 and reached their low point at age 17.

A better indicator of how much young people value reading is the extent to which they choose to read. Several questions surveyed the frequency with which they read and the priority reading takes vis-a-vis other activities.

More than two-thirds of the students said they read something at least once or twice a week for their own enjoyment:

How Often Do You Read For Your Own Enjoyment During Your Spare Time? 1979-80*

	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17
Almost every day	53.6%	35.4%	32.7%
Once or twice a week	28.4	35.9	32.3
Less than once a week	12.3	20.9	26.7
Never	5.3	7.6	7.9

*Columns may not total 100% due to rounding.

However, it appears that when they read, it is for less than an hour:

How Much Time Did You Spend Reading For Enjoyment Yesterday? 1979-80*

	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17
No time	27.8%	42.5%	43.6%
Less than 1 hour	27.1	29.8	32.2
1 or 2 hours	25.6	20.6	19.5
3 or more hours	12.5	5.8	4.2

*Columns may not total 100% due to rounding or % not responding.

Homework usually requires some daily reading. About two-thirds of the 13-year-olds and half of the 17-year-olds said they do homework of some kind; fewer than a third spent one hour or more on it:

How Much Time Did You Spend on Homework Yesterday? 1979-80*

	Age 13	Age 17
None	30.2%	31.7%
Didn't do it	6.2	12.6
Less than 1 hour	32.6	23.8
1 to 2 hours	23.5	22.3
2 hours or more	7.2	9.3

*Columns may not total 100% due to rounding.

In contrast, three-fourths of the 9- and 13-year-olds and two-thirds of the 17-year-olds indicated they watch an hour or more of television a day. About half the younger students and a third of the 17-year-olds appear to watch television at least three hours a day:

How Much Time Did You Spend Watching TV Yesterday? 1979-80*

	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17
None or less than 1 hour	20.2%	22.8%	38.8%
1-2 hours	23.4	28.2	30.4
3 or more hours	50.1	47.9	30.4

*Columns may not total 100% due to rounding or % not responding.

Although television appears to consume much more of their time than reading, both television and reading have low priority compared to movies. Given a choice between going to a movie and reading, half the 9-year-olds and nearly two-thirds of the teenagers would rather go to a movie. The older they get, the less interest they expressed in reading:

	Age 9*	Age 13	Age 17
A. Suppose you had several hours of free time and could do any of the following activities. Which one would you enjoy doing the **Most?**			
Reading a book	29.1%	12.6%	13.4%
Watching TV	16.3	20.2	15.4
Reading a magazine	2.3	4.1	7.1
Going to a movie	51.4	63.1	63.6
B. Which one of the same activities would you enjoy doing the **Least?**			
Reading a book	17.9	37.0	46.0
Watching TV	19.5	10.9	20.8
Reading a magazine	48.8	43.9	27.2
Going to a movie	13.0	7.8	5.9

*Columns may not total 100% due to rounding.

Notice again how interest in reading declined as students grew older. This is further reflected in their response to the question "Have you ever felt bored when you read a story?" The percentages replying affirmatively were 65% at age 9, 87% at 13 and 96% at 17.

Almost all students said they have laughed while reading, and 18% of the 9-year-olds, 27% of the 13-year-olds and 39% of the 17-year-olds said they have cried while reading. A third of the 9-year-olds, half of the 13-year-olds and 70% of the 17-year-olds have felt angry while reading.

How Well Do Students Think They Read?

In answer to the question "What kind of reader do you think you are for your age?" the students responded quite positively:

What Kind of Reader Are You? 1979-80*

	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17
A poor reader	2.6%	5.1%	6.2%
A good reader	56.1	65.8	62.4
A very good reader	38.3	25.4	28.9
I don't know	2.8	3.4	2.3

*Columns may not total 100% due to rounding.

Over 90% at each age believed they are good or very good. Results are somewhat different for several groups, however. For instance, a higher proportion of females and students in advantaged-urban schools believed they are "very good" readers; lower proportions of rural students said they are "very good," although the rural group performed about like the nation on reading assessments. Black, Southeastern and disadvantaged-urban students, as groups, perceived themselves as somewhat better readers than their performance would indicate. Perhaps this positive attitude acccunts, in part, for the improved performance these groups have displayed over the 1970s (**Three National Assessments of Reading: Changes in Performance, 1970-80,** 1981).

Large percentages of teenagers appear to have some problems with their reading, however. The following questions give us an indication of what students found difficult.

Is each of the following things usually easy for you, or is it usually hard?

		Usually Easy	Usually Hard	No Response
A. Keeping your mind on your reading	Age 9	78.6%	20.8%	0.3%*
	Age 13	67.1	32.8	0.1
	Age 17	63.1	36.4	0.4
B. Reading long sentences	Age 9	75.3	23.8	0.9
	Age 13	84.0	15.9	0.1
	Age 17	81.0	18.5	0.5
C. Finishing silent reading in class in the amount of time given	Age 9	60.1	39.2	0.7
	Age 13	64.8	35.1	0.1
	Age 17	68.6	30.9	0.6
D. Reading a story with new words	Age 9	42.0	57.2	0.8
	Age 13	51.2	48.6	0.2
	Age 17	57.3	42.1	0.6
E. Finishing books you have started	Age 9	79.8	19.1	1.1
	Age 13	72.7	27.1	0.2
	Age 17	71.4	27.7	0.8
F. Reading books with small printing	Age 9	53.1	46.3	0.7
	Age 13	67.4	32.1	0.5
	Age 17	71.0	28.3	0.7
G. Finding a book that interests you	Age 9	58.8	40.3	0.9
	Age 13	50.5	49.3	0.2
	Age 17	54.8	44.7	0.5
H. Reading very long books	Age 9	47.4	51.9	0.7
	Age 13	44.3	55.6	0.2
	Age 17	41.5	57.5	1.0
I. Finding a book on a subject that is easy for you to read	Age 9	82.7	17.0	0.3
	Age 13	82.1	17.7	0.2
	Age 17	81.6	17.9	0.6

*Rows may not total 100% due to rounding.

More than a quarter of the teenagers said it is usually hard for them to finish a book they have started; a third said it is usually hard keeping their minds on reading; and 40-50% said that it is usually hard for them to read materials with new words and to find books that interest them.

What Kinds of Material Do They Like to Read?

Nine-year-olds liked to read books about real people and events most often; teenagers preferred fiction. The older teens read current news magazines and editorials more often than the younger teens. Relatively few read plays and poetry, and hardly any read literary criticism.

Percentages Indicating They Often Like To Read Various Types of Material, 1979-80

Age 9		Age 13		Age 17	
Biography	49%	Fiction books	46%	Short stories	42%
History	47	Short stories	46	Fiction books	38
Fiction	35	Nonfiction books	33	Current news magazines	37
Poetry	35	Current news magazines	22	Nonfiction books	25
		Plays	19	Poetry	17
		Poetry	14	Editorials	12
		Editorials	6	Plays	11
		Literary criticism	4	Literary criticism	3

Preference for Fiction and Nonfiction*

	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17
Never read during spare time	7.8%	10.3%	10.8%
Mostly read **fiction**	21.2	30.7	27.3
Mostly read **nonfiction**	23.4	22.6	30.5
Read fiction and nonfiction about equally	47.2	36.0	30.8

*Columns may not total 100% due to rounding.

In general, females read more fiction and poetry than males, but more teenage males read news magazines and editorials than females.

Why Do They Read?

Students at all ages were asked several questions about the value of reading. The results indicate they know that one can read for a number of reasons but that they prefer utilitarian, practical reasons over reasons having to do with personal growth and pleasure. An example of the kind of questions they were asked follows:

	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17
Reading can help me learn how to make things that I could use	86.3%	91.4%	93.1%
What I read in books could help me understand more about the way I feel and act	65.0	63.2	71.1
Reading could help me learn about famous people and important events	88.0	97.2	97.7
What I read in stories or poems could help me find ways to get along better with people	53.4	60.9	65.8

When results for all items such as this one are summed, the following proportions emerge:

Ways Reading Can Be Valuable:

	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17
Source of information	82.0%	84.4%	91.8%
Valuable for the culture	—*	68.1	71.9
Source of enjoyment	75.2	69.0	66.2
Promote personal growth	54.5	56.3	67.3

*Not asked at age 9.

Most teenagers learn about current events from television and radio, although almost half appear to read a daily newspaper. Magazine reading for news is relatively infrequent.

How Often Do You Find Out About the News From Each of the Following Sources?

		Every Day	Several Times a Week	Several Times a Month	Several Times a Year	Never
Television	Age 13	68.3%	26.0%	3.5%	0.9%	0.8%*
	Age 17	65.8	29.4	3.5	0.7	0.4
Radio	Age 13	50.6	33.9	8.9	2.6	2.4
	Age 17	68.6	25.5	4.0	1.1	0.8
Magazines	Age 13	3.9	22.8	40.0	14.2	17.4
	Age 17	2.8	25.5	50.6	13.4	7.3
Newspapers	Age 13	41.1	35.4	11.8	5.2	5.1
	Age 17	48.3	33.6	12.8	3.4	1.8

*Rows may not total 100% due to rounding.

In Summary: Students' Reading Habits and Attitudes

- They think they are good readers.
- About 10% at each age do not read at all in their spare time (they may be able to, but they do not choose to).
- About one student in six, at each age, has difficulty finding books that are easy to read.
- A third to more than half the teenagers have problems concentrating on their reading, finishing classroom silent reading in time, finding books that interest them and reading long books.
- They believe reading is important and enjoy it at least "somewhat." However, less than half of the 13-year-olds and 17-year-olds enjoy it "very much."
- They like reading less as they get older.
- They watch television far more often than they read.
- When they read, it is for short periods of time.
- They prefer movies to either television or reading. Almost half of the 17-year-olds selected reading a book as their least favorite choice.
- They see reading's value to lie primarily in its being a source of information, not a source of enjoyment or self-understanding or cultural values.
- In general, females read more than males, white students more than blacks, advantaged students more than disadvantaged.

In conclusion, students appear to feel that reading is valuable and useful in general terms, but have only a moderate interest in reading themselves.

What Do They Know About Literary Works and Characters?

The first National Assessment literature objectives stressed the importance of a firm grounding in classic literary works (**Literature Objectives,** 1970). Attempts to assess this area have had limited success, however, for two major reasons: it is difficult to get a consensus about what works are "classics," and it has been impossible to sample a sufficient number of works to be able to draw conclusions about the breadth of students' exposure to literature. Consequently, our information does not lend itself well to generalizations.

Teenagers' exposure to some literary works was assessed by presenting them with "disguised" myths and stories. Here is a typical exercise of this type:

Listen carefully when I read the passage which is based on a famous story, then fill in the oval beside the name of the story that you think the passage is based on.

> Old Petersen had had a good life, a good farm—the richest in the country, a happy family, a nice tidy income. Even so, he wasn't proud, just thankful. Then the locusts came and ate his wheat, someone poisoned his wells, and to cap it off, his children died of diphtheria. What had happened, Petersen wondered. What had he done? It was enough to make a man lose his faith.

Which one of these stories do you think the passage is based on?

- Job
- Exodus
- Barabbas
- The Fall of Man
- I don't know.

Here is another approach:

"Let's call our motel the _____, so that travelers will know they can have a good long rest."

- Brom Bones
- Ichabod Crane
- Davy Crockett
- Rip Van Winkle
- I don't know.

The exercises used are included in the **Reading/Literature Released Exercise Set, 1979-80** (1981, pp. 260-280); the works or characters involved follow.

Works or Characters Assessed, Ages 13 and 17

The Emperor's New Clothes	Tom Sawyer
Samson	Noah
Johnny Appleseed	Galahad
Chicken Little	John Henry
Rip Van Winkle	Robin Hood
Adam	Cain and Abel
Job	Faust

When results for these exercises are averaged and the averages for both assessments are compared, we find a drop in recognition at both ages:

Mean Percentages Recognizing Literary Works and Characters

	1970-71	1979-80	Change
Age 13	65.2%	59.2%	—6.0%*
Age 17	70.5	64.7	—5.8*

*Asterisk indicates significant change in performance between assessments at the .05 level.

A handful of exercises assessed recognition by presenting students with parodies of such works as "Old Ironsides," "Sea Fever," "Casey at the Bat" and "Paul Revere's Ride" and asking them to recognize the works being parodied. Percentages of 9-year-olds recognizing the works were the same in the 1970-71 and 1979-80 assessments. However, the average percentage of success for 13-year-olds declined 5 points and the average for 17-year-olds declined 12 points.

Mean Percentages Recognizing Parodies

	1970-71	1979-80	Change
Age 9	42.3%	41.1%	— 1.2%
Age 13	53.4	48.4	— 5.0*
Age 17	68.7	56.8	—11.9*

*Asterisk indicates significant change in performance between assessments at the .05 level.

Because the number of works and characters assessed is so small, it is difficult to say what these drops mean about exposure to literature. The declines may imply that exposure is less now than it was a decade ago, but we would need far more information to be sure.

What Do They Know About Literary Language and Conventions?

Another dimension of literature studies is understanding imaginative language. Students' understanding was tested largely by asking them to write about literary works (see Chapters 3 and 4), but they also were given some multiple-choice items in both assessments. Several questions about metaphors revealed an improvement in understanding at age 9, but neither improvement nor decline at the other two ages. Although this finding rests on only four items, it is consistent with the general gain in 9-year-olds' reading ability reported elsewhere (**Three National Assessments of Reading: Changes in Performance, 1970-80**, 1981).

A number of questions tested 13- and 17-year-olds' understanding of puns, similes, hyperbole, theme, genre and other such aspects of literary language. The average percentage of success for 13-year-olds for 13 such questions was 72%; the average for 17-year-olds on the same questions was 85%. Clearly, a majority of teenagers could recognize and employ such terms when given an example and asked to do so.

In Summary: Students' Knowledge of Literary Works and Conventions

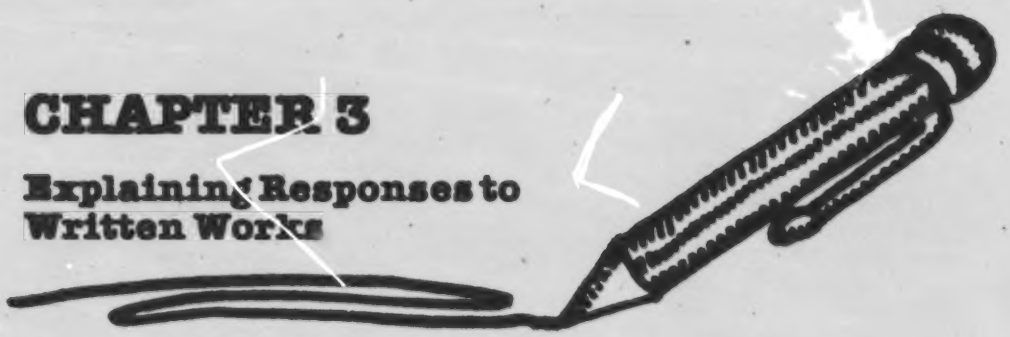
- Although assessment of characters and works was skimpy, there is no reason to believe the students have read broadly, and there is some reason to believe their exposure to literary works has declined over the last 10 years.

- When given specific examples and directions, most students could identify instances of metaphor, puns, hyperbole, and so forth. Their skill in this does not seem to have declined.

The best test of their knowledge of literary conventions is to see what they do when asked to analyze a work or explain their responses to it. The rest of this report addresses that issue along with many others.

CHAPTER 3

Explaining Responses to Written Works



In addition to initial comprehension of written texts, the objectives for the 1979-80 assessment of reading and literature stressed students' abilities to respond to texts in interpretive and evaluative ways. Such skills are more than the tools of the literary critic; they are powerful ways in which initial readings can be modified and extended through careful consideration of the text itself.

A variety of specific exercises was developed to assess the extent to which students could explain and extend their interpretations.

Although responses to this set of tasks varied from text to text and item to item, each task drew upon a set of related comprehension, thinking and writing skills. Each task began with a test of initial and relatively general comprehension of a text, whether story or poem. Drawing upon this initial comprehension, students then had to summarize some aspect of it — to identify the theme, for example, describe a character or label their own feelings about the text. The next step in each of these tasks required the readers to return to the work itself, to explain how the details of the story or poem joined together to reinforce the interpretation that they made.

As readers try to account for specific details in terms of their initial interpretations, they often find that the text is more complicated then they had originally recognized, and its message is accordingly richer than it appeared at first. This richness may in turn lead to modifications in the initial interpretation, or at least to a fuller understanding of the ways in which that interpretation (whether of character, theme or mood) is supported by the text itself.

The steps that underlie these tasks, then, are:

1. Initial comprehension, leading to
2. Preliminary interpretations, followed by
3. Reexamination of the text in light of these interpretations, leading to
4. Extended and documented interpretation.

In order to respond successfully to this set of tasks, students needed systematic procedures for approaching a text — procedures as simple as looking in turn at successive stanzas in a poem, discussing a list of character traits one at a time or tracing an image from beginning to end. Often, the more successful responses reflect knowledge of specialized analytic vocabulary and concepts, terms such as "imagery," "metaphor" and "point of view." It is the systematic application of such concepts in approaching the text, however, that seems crucial; rote knowledge of technical terms does little to enhance understanding of reading matter.

Students whose responses reflect systematic approaches to what they read often seem to emerge with a better understanding of what it is about. Much as the objectives for the assessment imply, in explaining and justifying their initial response to a text, they moved beyond that response to new layers of meaning that their peers often seem to have missed.

General Results

When we look at what students did when they were told to analyze texts, what do we see? First, we notice that whether the task is to analyze a text for mood or character or to analyze a text for theme, **students at ages 13 and 17 performed in similar ways.** Their analyses, even the very best ones, were heavily weighted by preliminary statements on theme, mood, character or emotions. A typical paper, no matter how sophisticated, began with a statement like: "The theme of this poem is to be yourself," or "I pityed (**sic**) the dog because it was half blind, and had mange," and then went on either to expound on the idea in the style of someone who sees it in only one dimension or to relate the idea back to the text by pointing to one or two pieces of evidence that clearly, but superficially, support it. Generally the **responses were short and superficial with little evidence to support the analyses.** When we look at the data for 17-year-olds discussing the theme of the poem, "i was you," we see the typical pattern: only 4.6% of the students provided substantive evidence to support their analyses; 19% gave minimal evidence of analysis and 57.8% offered a synopsis or brief statement of theme with no supporting evidence.

Read the poem below. Then write an essay about an important idea or theme of the poem. In your essay tell how such things as the images, events, sound and structure contribute to this idea or theme. We are interested in what you have to say, not your spelling and punctuation. Write your essay on the lines provided on the next two pages. You will have 9 minutes to read the poem and write your response.

i was you

i smiled
your smile
till my mouth
was set
and my face
was tight
and it wasn't right
it was wrong
i was you baby
i was you too long

i said
your words
till my throat
closed up
and i had
no voice
and i had
no choice
but to do your song
i was you baby
i was you too long

i lived
your life
till there was
no me
i was flesh
i was hair
but i wasn't there
it was wrong
i was you baby
i was you too long
and baby baby
the worst thing
to it
is that you let me
do it
so who was weak
and who was strong
for too long baby

Dori Previn

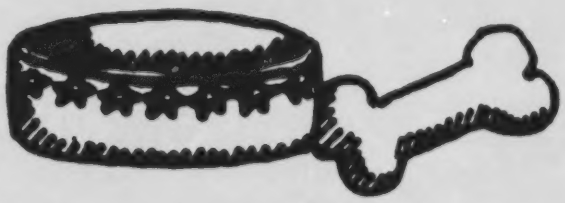
And while upwards of 75% of the 17-year-olds showed comprehension of some kind on multiple-choice items for these texts, only 5 to 10% showed strong analytic skills. Another 35 to 50% showed some uneven evidence of knowing that they can look at a text analytically, though they might not do so with any detail. Another 25 to 40% primarily retold the text in some way, rather than used it as evidence to substantiate ideas or opinions. About 10 to 15% showed no evidence of being able to do the analytic tasks at all.

The exceptions to this general trend are noteworthy though, because they point to the power of the text to influence students to write more involved, substantiated, elaborated and coherent analyses. The best example comes from both 13- and 17-year-olds' responses to the highly emotional selection "A Story of a Good Dog" (Appendix C). The specific task asked readers to use the text to explain their feelings and emotions about the story. Sixty-two percent of the 13-year-olds and 58% of the 17-year-olds wrote adequate analyses — that is, analyses that used some reference to the text in order to explain the student's response. Typically, both 13- and 17-year-olds wrote better substantiated analyses in response to "A Story of a Good Dog" story than they did in response to other stories. However, very few of even the better analyses proceeded in any way that would allow us to conclude the students had a procedure for approaching this kind of task. We would have expected, for example, that students might have proceeded simply by analyzing paragraphs or stories one at a time; or, when given the general directions to use plot, character or language as they contribute to a theme, they would have proceeded by looking at these elements in relation to the theme. **No such demonstration of systematic approaches to analyses showed up in the responses at any age group.**

We did see, however, that generally when students used evidence, most focused on content. Only 5% or less of the students mentioned any aspect of the form of literary selections, and only 10% or less cited personal evidence. This picture changes slightly for "A Story of a Good Dog," with 76% of the 13- and 17-year-olds using evidence from the story to substantiate their analyses and 9% of the 13-year-olds and 12.4% of the 17-year-olds using personal evidence. Again, it seems that the text ("A Story of a Good Dog") and the task (to discuss your emotions rather than character, mood or theme) drove the students to new approaches. Typically, though, here again, only 1% of the students discussed any aspect of the form of the selection.

9-Year-Olds' Success in Explaining Responses

The ability to explain responses through careful reference to a text is a relatively sophisticated one that develops throughout the secondary school years. For the assessment of 9-year-olds, two items were used to provide some indication of the ability of younger students to undertake such tasks. One item asked readers to explain their feelings and emotions in response to the poem "Old Dog."



Read the poem below and then answer the questions on the next two pages.

Old Dog

Toward the last in the morning she could not
get up, even when I rattled her pan.
I helped her into the yard, but she stumbled
and fell. I knew it was time.

The last night a mist drifted over the fields.
In the morning she would not raise her head—
the far, clear mountains we had walked
surged back to mind.

We looked a slow bargain: our days together
were the ones we had already had.
I gave her something the vet had given,
and patted her still, a good last friend.

The other asked them to explain a judgment of William Carlos Williams' intention in writing "As the Cat."

Here is a poem about which you are going to be asked two questions. I will read the poem to you as you read it to yourself. When we have read the poem carefully, I will read you the first question and you are to fill in the oval beside the answer you think best. Then I will read the second question to you and you are to write your answer in the answer space.

As the cat
climbed over
the top of

the jam closet
first the right
forefoot

carefully
then the hind
stepped down

into the pit of
the empty
flowerpot

William Carlos Williams

Table 3-1 summarizes the major results.

Table 3-1.

Percentages Explaining Responses: Age 9, 1980

	Barely Adequate	Adequate	Inadequate	Unratable
Feelings or emotions "Old Dog"	15.7%	39.0%	33.1%	12.2%
Author's intent "As the Cat"	11.5	36.3	39.8	12.4

Although all but about 12% of the students attempted both tasks, their responses were very limited. For example, some 88% were able to describe their feelings in response to the poem "Old Dog," but only 16% adequately related these feelings to characteristics of the poem (see Appendix C for scoring criteria). Thirty-nine percent managed a barely adequate response, briefly citing a single aspect of the poem as the justification for the feelings aroused. (Typically, with this poem, 9-year-olds claimed to feel "sad — because the dog died.") With both poems, students turned for evidence to the specific content (or "action") of the poem, rather than commenting upon formal characteristics of the text. The two examples below illustrate different ways in which 9-year-olds attempted to relate their feelings to the content of the text:

> I felt kind of sad for the dog's death.
> It was that the poor doggy stumbled; and on the next morning he wouldn't raise his head at all; and when the dog died, the girl patted the dog on the head and that was what made me feel the way I said up there ↑

> I had two feelings, I was sad and happy.
> I was sad because the dog was going to die. And I was happy because they helped the dog.

"Old Dog" also prompted some personal associations from 8% of the students, usually in the form of anecdotes about their own experiences with death.

Though the 9-year-olds' data are very limited, the results suggest that most 9-year-olds have yet to develop the skills necessary for explaining their interpretations of text, though they are quite capable of forming initial impressions about meaning.

13-Year-Olds' Success In Explaining Responses

For 13-year-olds, similar sets of items asked for text-based explanations of interpretations of character, of mood and of feelings and emotions. Table 3-2 summarizes the results.

Table 3-2.

Percentages Explaining Responses: Age 13, 1979*

	Adequate	Barely Adequate	Inadequate	Unratable
Character				
"Somebody's Son"	27.0%	45.6%	21.6%	5.8%
Unreleased description	21.3	46.4	29.0	3.4
Mood				
"The Closing of the Rodeo"	32.2	32.0	28.5	7.3
Unreleased narrative	35.4	24.5	34.5	5.6
Emotion				
"Old Dog"	40.5	36.7	19.4	3.4
"A Story of a Good Dog"	61.8	16.5	10.4	11.2

*Rows may not total 100% due to rounding.

Like the 9-year-olds, the 13-year-olds were quite capable of making initial generalizations about these aspects of text. Between 89 and 97% of the students attempted a response to these items, identifying some aspect of character, mood or emotional response.

At least rudimentary explanations of these interpretations were offered on 60 to 78% of the papers. Items discussing personal feelings in response to a text prompted somewhat more adequate responses than those involving discussion of character. Discussions of mood, which are related to personal responses but more abstract, seemed of intermediate difficulty. Fewer of the 13-year-olds moved beyond a barely adequate explanation. Though 62% were able to explain their feelings about "A Story of a Good Dog," only 21% were able to provide adequate explanations of their characterization of the old man in an unreleased exercise based on a descriptive passage.

Even the better responses at age 13 tended to be short and based on limited evidence. For most items, fewer than 5% of the responses drew more than three bits of evidence from the text; the major exception was in response to "A Story of a Good Dog," where fully 20% of the 13-year-olds elaborated their responses with four or more bits of evidence. References to specific aspects of content dominated responses, although a few references to form appeared in response to the two unreleased exercises (3% of the students, in both cases). Personal reactions were also cited by a number of students, depending upon the nature of the text. These ranged from 1% in response to a relatively remote situation in the unreleased exercise asking for characterization, to a high of 18% in discussing personal feelings aroused by the death in the poem "Old Dog."

The responses below are typical of those in which students directly associated their own experiences with those in the poem.

I felt sort of sad but acceptable.

I like animals especially dogs. I have a 10 year old poodle at home and I know that he is not going to live forever so the poem gave me something to expect. This poem made me get a feeling that I should accept an old dogs death but I don't think it is going to be as easy for me.

My emotions were sad and sorriful

It made me feel that the death of my dogs will come.

It made me think of when my dog died

My dog died over night he was sorta like that dog

17-Year-Olds' Success in Explaining Responses

Items at age 17 paralleled those at age 13, with the addition of a fourth set asking students to identify and explain (with evidence from the text) an important idea or theme they saw in the selection. Since theme is a relatively abstract and difficult notion, the question stems for these items were highly specific, pointing the students toward such differing aspects of the text as plot, characters, setting, images, language and structure for evidence. Results from all items are summarized in Table 3-3.

Table 3-3.

Percentages Explaining Responses: Age 17, 1980*

	Adequate	Barely Adequate	Inadequate	Unratable
Theme				
" i was you"	4.6%	19.0%	70.3%	6.1%
Unreleased narrative	9.7	20.2	61.5	8.6
Character				
"Somebody's Son"	41.4	42.4	13.6	2.5
Unreleased description	38.3	43.1	16.3	2.3
Mood				
"The Closing of the Rodeo"	41.2	37.9	16.6	4.3
Unreleased narrative	37.6	26.6	32.2	3.4
Emotion				
"A Story of a Good Dog"	57.7	22.9	11.6	7.7

*Rows may not total 100% due to rounding.

At age 17, the ability to analyze a text for evidence to support preliminary interpretations varied sharply with the nature of that initial interpretation. On the one item asking for explanations of feelings, over 80% of the students were able to provide at least minimally adequate explanations, and 58% elaborated on their responses. At the other extreme, fewer than 30% of the students were able to analyze a text in order to provide even minimal explanations for generalizations about theme or main idea. The evidence they provided tended to involve a fairly simple and direct line between a statement about theme and the "act" in the text, as in the following examples.

I feel the idea of this poem is to point out that, everyone has their own life, & the person in this poem is living someone else's life, not his own, now he or she realizes that they aren't living their life the way they want to, they're living their life the way someone else wants them to live.

It say to be yourself, and don't try to act like anyone else or you will become that person. Also it says that you should not let someone imitate you. There does not need to be two of one person in this world. This person imitated the second person so long, he lost all self identity. He had lost himself too long & could not find himself.

In spite of the fact that students were directed to look for and use types of evidence for this task, only 5 to 10% of them connected their generalizations to various aspects of the text. Here are examples of the few successful responses.

I think the theme is one of hopelessness. The "i" of the poem seems hopelessly compelled to be the "you." The poem seems to indicate a great love or respect. Why else would "i lived your life till there was no me..."?

The structure of the poem, the small-case letters, no punctuation, the short phrases, fit perfectly with the theme. There is no real order or sense to it, but it continues on.

I can almost hear the poem being read in a sort of haunting, whispering tone.

I feel that the whole poem is very effective and I enjoyed reading it. To a small extent, I can relate to the need to be like some one to the point of losing your own identity.

The whole theme of the poem in my opinion is, that the auther is trying to say that you can't live your life through other people.

I and was are used continually throughout the work. Was is used to show that no longer am "I your baby." Also the little i is just kind of saying that it's not myself but what you want me to be.

"i was your baby" and "i was you to long" is also repeated. This repetition helps to show that she's not her baby any longer and she/he is going to live her own life now.

In explaining character, mood and feelings aroused in response to a text, 17-year-olds continued to turn primarily to aspects of the content or action in the texts. A small proportion of the students (5% or less, depending upon the specific text) also made some reference to formal characteristics. Between 3 and 12% drew upon personal reactions as evidence for their interpretations. Discussions of theme, where specific types of evidence were highlighted by the instructions, were not categorized according to the types of evidence used.

Overall, the results suggest that 17-year-olds are unused to being asked to explain the meaning they draw from texts. Although a reasonably high percentage defended assertions about such limited aspects of text as mood and characterization, they had no systematic way to go about analyzing a text as a whole. The most frequent approach when confronted with a task asking for a discussion of the theme or main idea was to provide a summary or synopsis; 47% of the responses to "i was you" and 49% of those to the unreleased exercise took this approach. The responses below represent the approach taken in nearly half of the responses to "i was you."

The person seems to think that the other person has led them away, brought them deeper and deeper into love. They seem to have let go and now realize how it was going to hurt when it was all over between them. They told how the different thing attracked them and made it worse. The person seems to be trying to say that they have lived the others live but nothing came in return to make them a better person.

This poem is discribing someone who has lost their identity. They have tryed to be someone else so long. They've forgotten who they are. In the first of the poem the person put on the appearance of someone else and in doing so forgot what they really looked like. Next, they began to talk like the person and now he doesn't know what he had to say and last he began to live like that person and in doing so he gave up his own life.

Although such a restatement of the events in a text can be a productive beginning point, the majority of the 17-year-olds did not move beyond this initial retelling.

When we look at our open-ended inferencing data by groups — race and community — we see, generally, that black 9- and 13-year-old students performed at least 10 percentage points lower than their white counterparts, while black 17-year-olds performed from 15 to 25% below their white counterparts. Thirteen-year-olds from disadvantaged-urban communities performed 7 to 33 percentage points below students from advantaged-urban communities, while students from rural areas performed slightly above students from disadvantaged communities but 6 to 17 percentage points below students from advantaged-urban communities.

Seventeen-year-old students from disadvantaged-urban communities performed 12 to 27 percentage points below students from advantaged-urban communities, while students from rural areas performed considerably above students from disadvantaged communities but, with two exceptions, 10 to 15 percentage points below students from advantaged-urban communities.

These differences between black students and white students and students from different types of communities are somewhat larger than the differences found when we examine performance on multiple-choice questions.[1]

[1]See Three National Assessments of Reading: Changes in Performance, 1970-80 (1981).

Changes in Analytic Skills

Two released items from the 1970-71 assessment of literature were readministered for this assessment; together with the multiple-choice items, these items formed the basis for our analytic task change data.

One task asked 9-year-olds to identify and substantiate their claims about William Carlos Williams' intention in writing the poem "As the Cat." Results showed virtually no change from 1971 to 1980. In 1971, 77.8% of the 9-year-olds answered the inferential comprehension multiple-choice item correctly, while 78.7% answered the same item correctly in 1980. Twelve and three-tenths percent of the 1971 9-year-olds wrote adequate analyses of the text for author's intention, while 11.5% did the same task adequately in 1980.

A somewhat different picture emerges from the change data on 13- and 17-year-olds. These students were given a poem, "The Closing of the Rodeo" by William Jay Smith, and were asked to identify and substantiate mood. The identification of mood was handled through a multiple-choice item, and the substantiation was handled in an open-ended analytic task similar to the other analytic tasks.

Here is a poem about which you are going to be asked two questions. I will read the poem aloud as you read it to yourself. When we have read the poem carefully, I will read you the first question and you are to fill in the oval beside the answer you think best. Then I will read the second question to you and you are to write your answer in the answer space.

The Closing of the Rodeo

The lariat snaps; the cowboy rolls
His pack, and mounts and rides away.
Back to the land the cowboy goes.

Plumes of smoke from the factory sway
In the setting sun. The curtain falls,
A train in the darkness pulls away.

Goodbye, says the rain on the iron roofs.
Goodbye, say the barber poles.
Dark drum the vanishing horses' hooves.

William Jay Smith

On the multiple-choice item, 13-year-olds exhibited a significant 4.5% decline over the 10 years. On the open-ended analytic tasks, on the other hand, the 13-year-olds' performance remained constant over the 10 years. In 1970, 33.2% of the 13-year-olds wrote adequate analyses, while in 1979, 32.2% did so.

The results of the mutiple-choice item for 17-year-olds — a 2.5% decline over the 10 years — are similar to the mean declines reported in inferential comprehension for 17-year-olds on 10 years of change in reading.[2] Even more remarkable is the drastic decline of 10 percentage points for the number of 17-year-olds writing adequate analyses for the open-ended task that asked them to substantiate their claims about the mood by turning back to the text for evidence. In 1971, 51.2% of the 17-year-olds wrote adequate analyses, while in 1980, 41.2% did so. Of the 17-year-olds, 11.1% wrote inadequate analyses in the earlier assessment, while 16.6% wrote inadequate analyses in the later assessment. No evidence at all was given by 12.6% to substantiate their claims for mood in the earlier assessment, while in the later assessment, 18.2% gave no evidence.

The convergence of the reading and literature results for 17-year-olds is fairly compelling: inferential comprehension declined significantly for this age group on 10 years of reading change data, and the same trends are evident for this age group on these reading, responding and writing tasks. In other words, 17-year-olds' performance on inferential tasks declined in all areas of reading and literature during the 9-year period; and the decline was most drastic when the students were asked to explain and substantiate their responses.

When we look at our change data by groups — e.g., race and sex — we see an uneven picture of gains and declines. At age 9, students from advantaged-urban communities declined almost 6 percentage points, while students from disadvantaged-urban and rural communities showed overall gains of 4.3% and 5%, respectively. The picture shifts somewhat at age 13, with blacks and disadvantaged-urban students showing the only gains of 5.8% and 6.1%, respectively. Students from advantaged-urban and rural communities showed declines of over 6 percentage points.

The most dismal portrait of change by groups comes from the 17-year-olds' data, where blacks were down from 1970-71 on the inferential analysis task by 12.1 percentage points, whites by 9.1 points, students from advantaged-urban communities by 10.9 points and students from disadvantaged-urban communities by 2.4 percentage points. The only gains for 17-year-olds were made by students from rural communities, with a 4.1% increase from 1970-71.

Conclusions

One of the most telling and immediately disturbing conclusions we can draw from these findings is that hardly any of the students — 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds or 17-year-olds — showed evidence of having and using a systematic approach to the analytic tasks. Even when one takes into account the fact that the students were working in test-like conditions with limited time in which to respond, the papers are disappointing in this regard. Rather than writing open-ended analyses that proceed by any one of the many possible approaches to analyzing texts (e.g., paragraph by paragraph, focusing on elements in the text or following one aspect of meaning through the whole text), these students wrote quick, easy answers focused almost exclusively on the content (or action) of the text. Even the most sophisticated papers usually lacked systematic approaches to the task. Students produced responses that were fragmentary, superficial and cryptic; they did not go much beyond this kind of response to closely analyze the texts or themselves as readers with opinions, interpretations and judgments.

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[2] See Three National Assessments of Reading: Changes in Performance, 1970-80 (1981).

When we look at students' performance on multiple-choice inferential questions, we are struck by their relatively capable performance on these items in relation to their weak performance on open-ended items that call for analysis and inferencing. Even though 9-year-olds showed little change on either the multiple-choice or open-ended task, the change data on 17-year-olds paints this picture with the dramatic 10 percentage-point decline in the number of students who wrote adequate analyses in 1971 as compared with those who wrote adequate analyses in 1980.

Quite clearly, students did fairly well on multiple-choice inferential items, but they did not go much beyond these tasks to the more complex, yet fundamental, tasks that asked them to explain and substantiate their inferences. We are consequently concerned that students' successes with quick multiple-choice inferential tasks and their failures to substantiate their inferences are derived from their classroom experiences. Students in all age groups might not be getting opportunities to engage in the extended discourse, either oral or written, that teaches them how to explain and substantiate their inferences in even the most basic ways.

We are also dismayed that older students did not provide more varying kinds of evidence than younger ones. The almost exclusive use of content as evidence points to another undeveloped aspect of the explanatory abilities of these students. We cannot help but see this as an extension of their classroom experiences, or, rather, their lack of experiences with what would take them beyond quick, easy answers to thoughtful, substantiated explanations of various aspects of a text.

The 13- and 17-year-olds who explained their inferences in either barely adequate or adequate ways were best at discussing their own emotions and worst at discussing theme. On the other hand, very few 9-year-olds (11.5%) explained their emotional reactions to a story in adequate ways, although about 36% of them came up with barely adequate explanations. There does, in other words, seem to be gradual growth in students' abilities to discuss limited kinds of inferences, especially personal emotions, as they get older.

There also seems to be evidence that emotionally powerful texts like "A Story of a Good Dog" lend themselves to richer, more elaborated analyses. Both 13- and 17-year-old students incorporated more evidence into their reactions to this story than to any other selection. It also seems clear that certain kinds of texts lend themselves to particular kinds of analyses. Some prompt attention to character and some, like "A Story of a Good Dog," prompt attention to emotions more than anything else.

CHAPTER 4

Evaluating Written Works

The poem is telling her son that life isn't easy.

In addition to teaching students how to make reasoned interpretations of texts, another major goal of instruction in reading and literature is to develop the students' abilities to evaluate written works against appropriate criteria. Such criteria cover a wide range, including such factors as interest, relevance, formal coherence, clarity, imagination and social importance. Specific criteria will vary with the purpose for reading and with the individual reader's personal values. Good readers should, however, be able to articulate the evaluative criteria they are using, and they should be able to bring these criteria to bear in reasoned ways upon texts.

Two sets of items were developed to assess students' evaluative skills. The first set focused on the criteria that readers bring to bear in their evaluations, asking simply "What makes a good story? List three things on the lines below." (An alternate version asked what makes a good poem.) Each of the items in the second set began with a multiple-choice question about whether a particular passage was a "good story" or a "good poem," and followed that up by asking the reader to explain what in the passage had led to that judgment.

In answering these questions, students have to draw upon many of the same comprehension, thinking and writing skills required in explaining interpretations of such things as mood, character or theme. In addition to analyzing texts in support of their judgment, however, explaining an evaluation forces students to consider the (sometimes implicit) evaluative criteria they are using. As with other tasks requiring analysis, we would expect that the process of elaboration and justification would in turn lead readers toward a more comprehensive understanding of the text; in some cases, it might even lead to a reconsideration of the initial evaluation.

Results: Evaluative Criteria

The criteria that 9-, 13- and 17-year-olds cited when asked what makes a good story or poem are summarized in Table 4-1. For both stories and poems, the proportion of unsuccessful attempts to list specific criteria decreased in moving from 9- to 17-year-olds' samples. The proportion of students unable to respond to the item at all dropped from 9-12% to 2-3%; the proportion listing only one or two criteria dropped from 40-42% to 13-17%; and the proportion of off-task responses dropped from 20-25% to 3-4%. For both stories and poems, about half of the students gave at least one unelaborated or circular kind of criterion, e.g., "the writer," "good writing," "the ending," "language" or "good subject." This proportion remained relatively constant across ages in response to "good story," and rose from 40 to 58% between ages 9 and 17 for "good poem." Table 4-1 presents the percentages of students who cited specific kinds of criteria for their evaluations.

Table 4-1.

Criteria Given for Evaluating Stories and Poems, Ages 9, 13 and 17, 1979-80

	Percent of Students Citing Criteria at Least Once (Out of Three Opportunities)					
	Good Story			Good Poem		
	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17
Blank	41.8%	18.5%	12.8%	40.5%	25.4%	16.6%
Unelaborated or circular	50.9	55.5	53.7	40.3	46.9	57.9
Genre feature—unelaborated	4.1	22.7	31.2	0.5	1.7	2.2
Format only	12.2	11.0	4.2	11.8	13.8	3.1
Off-task—illegible	25.2	7.0	3.1	20.1	12.1	3.8
Content	22.8	37.1	43.0	13.1	19.9	31.2
Form	7.4	14.5	16.3	45.6	65.4	62.4
Subjective reaction	23.5	42.1	45.6	18.2	31.2	43.9
No response to item	9.3	2.1	2.2	11.7	8.5	3.3

Note: Blank = no criteria stated. Unelaborated or circular = superficial criteria. Genre feature — unelaborated = criteria related to aspects of the genre (the kind of literature — poem, story, play, etc. — being read), like plot. Format only = criteria related to format. Off-task — illegible = unratable. Content = criteria related to content of selection. Form = criteria related to aspects of form, like the selection's language or beginning. Subjective reaction = personal criteria.

More specific criteria listed by the students assessed were categorized as focusing on content, form or subjective reaction. Although percentages varied across genres (kinds of literature), the proportions of students who cited each specific category of evaluative criteria increased with age, suggesting a general improvement with age in the ability to articulate criteria.

At age 9, 23% of the students cited some aspect of content as an important characteristic of good stories. These responses included references to such criteria as "mystery stories," "Westerns," "fantasy," "suspense" and "drama," as well as references to theme. Another 24% of the students referred to the personal, subjective reaction evoked by a story, citing such criteria as "interesting," "funny," "imaginative," "suspenseful" or "adventurous." Only 7% of the 9-year-olds mentioned any aspect of form, including criteria such as "vivid language," "suspenseful beginning" and "happy ending." (Another 4% mentioned some genre trait, e.g., plot or rhyme, without specifying what aspect of the genre feature contributed to the evaluation.) By age 17, the proportion who cited aspects of content increased to 43%, subjective reactions to 46% and form to 16%.

Responses to poems showed the same general improvement with age in ability to cite specific criteria, though the balance among criteria differed from that for stories. Even 9-year-olds seem to have recognized that form is an important aspect of poetry; 46% at age 9 cited at least one formal criterion for good poetry; the percentage increased to 65% at age 13 and 62% at age 17. Conversely, only 13% of the 9-year-olds and 31% of the 17-year-olds cited aspects of content in describing what makes a good poem.

The criteria cited by the students were also categorized according to whether they referred to the work as a whole, required some analysis of the text or made some reference to theme. Results indicate an overwhelming emphasis on the work as a whole at all three ages. For good poems, the proportion of analysis rose from about 1% at age 9 to about 4% by age 17, and the proportion of references to theme increased from less than 1% to about 9%. Stories prompted less concern with either analysis or statement of theme; about 3% of the students cited such criteria at any of the three ages.

Results: Explaining Evaluation

The results reported so far focus upon students' abilities to formulate evaluative criteria; they tell us nothing about their abilities to apply these criteria to specific works in reasoned ways. This set of abilities was assessed in the second series of evaluative items, which asked students to explain their evaluations of particular texts. Results are summarized in Table 4-2.

Table 4-2.

Summary of 1979-80 Results for Evaluating Written Works, Ages 9, 13 and 17*

	No Evaluation	Primarily Brief List of Assertions and Observations	Primarily Content Details or Summary	Evaluation With Supporting Evidence
Age 9				
Story—fable	20.7%	23.5%	53.8%	2.0%
Age 13				
Story—fable	7.7	27.2	54.2	11.0
Story—African folk tale	14.4	36.8	40.8	7.9
Poem—"Mother to Son"	13.1	35.9	46.6	4.3
	Avg. = 11.7%	Avg. = 33.3%	Avg. = 47.2%	Avg. = 7.7%
Age 17				
Story—fable	5.1	36.8	38.2	19.8
Story—African folk tale	10.1	44.8	24.6	20.6
Poem—"Mother to Son"	6.3	28.1	57.5	8.1
Poem—metaphor death	15.7	54.6	25.6	4.1
Story—"One of These Days"	12.2	48.1	29.9	9.8
	Avg. = 9.9%	Avg. = 42.5%	Avg. = 35.2%	Avg. = 12.5%

*Rows may not total 100% due to rounding.

At age 9, 21% of the students did not write an evaluation that went beyond their initial judgment of whether the selection was good or bad. By age 17, responses that did not even attempt to explain the evaluation fell to an average of 10%, although they continued as high as 16% for particular texts. Of those responses that did not go beyond the initial evaluation, about half were illegible, illiterate or blank papers. The other half consisted primarily of brief reiterations of the initial response—"I just like it"; "It was a good story"; "It's the kind of story I like."

Regardless of passage-type, three-fourths of the papers at each age fell into one of two rather broad response patterns. The first response pattern consisted primarily of a short list of rather vague assertions or observations about the passages. Though some of these responses contained references to the text, they largely comprised unsupported statements. The second response pattern was a summary or synopsis of the story or poem. Though the evaluative criteria being used in such cases were not stated explicitly, students seem to have singled out aspects of content in deciding whether a particular story or poem was "good."

Averaging across specific passages, responses relying primarily on lists of vague assertions increased from 24% at age 9 to 33% at 13 and 42% at 17. What is most striking and even alarming about these evaluations is their almost universal applicability to any passage from any book, movie, song or magazine. Although evaluations of poems can sometimes be differentiated from evaluations of stories, many of the responses to quite different passages are interchangeable across passages and grade levels. This is particularly true of the responses at ages 13 and 17, which can sometimes be distinguished from those of the 9-year-olds' through their use of a more sophisticated style and vocabulary. The following examples are representative of the responses at ages 9, 13 and 17:

Age 9

I think the story is good but not super good. But it is a dull story.

It was funny. I thought it was interesting. I liked it alot because I have never read a story about that. I loved it.

It was a little silly with a good ending.

Age 13

To me it does not seem much like a poem and I don't like that kind of language

The way she talk and the theme of the poem and what it was about

The story didn't have any suspense like a good one would have, also, it would have been better if the main character was a first-person story teller. This would have made the story more interesting.

I thought it was very good it served its purpose. The had a lesson in it. The story was happy at the end.

Age 17

I decided the story was a good one on the basis that it was attempting to give an informative message to the reader.

It was a good story because the main points were easily to follow. The theme was very evident, although it did seem a little weak. In addition, the story had much action which kept the reader interested.

It is well written, and carries a message.

Because it kept a very descriptive moving pace. It was never at a standstill.

The story was full of suspense and kept the reader in doubt as to the outcome. The author uses much description in revealing the characters and the setting. There is a hidden meaning running throughout the story and this definitely intrigues the reader. Together with the suspense, the extraordinary description, and the underlying motive, the author has created an interesting story.

The other major pattern in response to the request to explain an evaluation focused on the content of the work, through the selection of particular details or through a summary or synopsis. Such responses were given by 54% of the students at age 9, 47% at age 13 and 35% at age 17. Although students responding in this way might be singling out aspects of content that particularly interested or entertained them, such responses are ultimately unsuccessful in that the evaluative criteria remained unformulated, and hence, the explanation of the evaluation remained implicit as well. The following examples illustrate the range of responses. As with those that rely upon lists of assertions about a text, some of these attempts to describe specific content were so brief and general that it would be difficult to identify the particular passage.

The sheiff did harm to others but never thought he would need help. He was supposed to be so tough but when it came right down to it he couldn't take the pain, like the men He killed.

It was about a dentist that didn't have much respect for the mayor. And the reason I didn't like it was because of the dentist attitude.

It talks about not giving up on life and even though she didn't have a great life she didn't stop.

I like the way the mother described her life and the way she encouraged the little boy not to quit on his life to just keep going and there may be something in life for him.

The poem is telling her son that life isn't easy and you are going to fall on your face a few times but don't let it stop you, keep on climbing and reaching for the top.

Only a very small proportion of the responses to these items successfully addressed the task, including both judgments about specific texts and support for these judgments. The proportion of successful papers increased from 2% at age 9 to 8% at 13 and 12% at 17. The nature of these successful responses varied somewhat depending upon the particular passage, and on whether the initial evaluation of the passage was negative or positive. About half of the successful evaluations tended to reach some generalization about the purpose of the text, as in the illustrations below:

I think this is an excellent poem because, when I finished reading it, I felt a feeling of renewed courage and strength to face outside again. It made me think that my life is just as bad as the next person and never to give up when I'm feeling discouraged.

It was the idea of the poem that made me choose the answer I did. The poem talks about life and that it isn't easy to get to the top. I think it describes reality.

This poem is good, because it is filled with optomism and idealism. The mother, throughout all of her experiences, both bad and good, has been able to "keep her sunny side up." She is encouraging her son to do the same. Another feature that gives this poem quality is the style of writing. The grammar in it infers that the mother may not have had an advanced education, and writing a poem without that kind of education gives the poem a certain deep, affectionate quality.

A large proportion of the remainder of the successful attempts at explaining evaluations were written by students who did not like the passage. Evaluations of the poem "Mother to Son," for instance, concentrated on the form of the poem, while evaluations of the story "One of These Days" criticized the lack of detail in the story. Again, examples illustrate the nature of these evaluations:

The poem had words in it like "ain't, kinder, goin' " the words aren't good grammar. The story looked as if it had been written by an illiterate.

The reason I chose no, is because it was poorly written and somewhat confusing because of all the dumb words they use. The words were actually too simple.

It didn't make any sense. First of all, they gave you no clue to who the twenty men were, why they died, and how the mayor was responsible for their deaths. There were too many unanswered questions that left holes in the story.

There was no apparent meaning to the story. It was rather simple reading also. The narrative did not supply why specifically the dentist had distaste for the mayor, or what the purpose was in the dentist mentioning the twenty dead men. The story needs to have more precise detail, and definitely a theme to it, in order to improve the quality of the story.

Results of Liking the Story or Poem

Each question that required a written evaluation of a passage first asked students "Is this a good story?" or "Is this a good poem?" Table 4-3 shows the percentages of students responding "yes" or "no" to these questions for each passage, as well as the percentages falling into each of the four evaluative response patterns by their "yes" or "no" answers.

Table 4-5.

Percentages Liking Each Passage and Effect of Liking Passage on Evaluative-Response Patterns, Ages 9, 15 and 17

	"Is this a good story or poem?"		Liked Story or Poem				Did Not Like Story or Poem				Non-ratable
	Yes	No	No Evaluation	Primarily Brief List Assertions Observations	Primarily Content Details or Summary	Evaluation With Supporting Evidence	No Evaluation	Primarily Brief List Assertions Observations	Primarily Content Details or Summary	Evaluation With Supporting Evidence	
Age 9											
Story—fable	80.0%	17.0%	7.1%	17.5%	46.5%	1.9%	1.8%	5.9%	6.9%	0.1%	11.8%
Age 13											
Story—fable	81.3	17.6	2.1	17.3	49.1	10.1	0.6	9.9	5.1	0.9	4.9
Story—African folk tale	82.9	14.1	3.8	29.7	37.9	5.9	1.2	7.1	2.8	2.1	9.4
Poem—"Mother to Son"	68.8	29.9	4.2	15.3	41.9	3.2	1.7	20.5	4.7	1.1	7.1
	Avg. = 77.7%	Avg. = 20.5%									
Age 17											
Story—fable	76.9	22.1	1.3	20.9	34.4	18.6	0.9	15.8	3.8	1.1	2.9
Story—African folk tale	79.1	19.2	2.4	33.8	21.7	17.2	0.9	10.9	2.8	3.3	6.8
Poem—"Mother to Son"	81.7	18.0	2.0	15.7	54.4	7.5	1.1	12.4	3.0	0.5	3.2
Poem—metaphor death	66.0	33.3	4.8	28.3	24.0	3.2	2.1	26.3	1.6	0.9	8.7
Story—"One of These Days"	50.5	46.7	1.8	20.6	17.8	6.3	1.4	27.4	12.1	3.5	8.9
	Avg. = 70.8%	Avg. = 27.9%									

Several comments can be made about students' responses to the initial multiple-choice questions and the relationship between their multiple-choice answers and their written evaluations. First, from reading the papers, it is clear that students generally considered a passage to be good if they "liked" it and not good if they did not "like" it or did not understand it. Second, students generally liked the passages. Over three-fourths at each age liked the fable, and about two-thirds of the 13-year-olds and four-fifths of the 17-year-olds liked the poem "Mother to Son." However, only two-thirds of the 17-year-olds liked a rather sophisticated poem using metaphor to talk about death, and even fewer (about half) liked the story "One of These Days" by Gabriel Marquez.

Those students who liked a passage were generally more likely to write supported evaluations than those who did not like the passage. This was particularly true for passages that most students liked. This might be because many of the small number of students who answered "no" did so because they did not understand the passage and, due to this lack of understanding, were unable to provide evaluations. For those passages less favorably received, students who did not like the passages were often less likely to support their evaluations than students who liked the passages.

If students liked a passage, generally there seemed to be about an equal tendency to either provide brief lists of judgments or to retell or summarize content. A tendency toward one or the other response pattern seemed to depend on the passage. If students did not like a passage, there was a clear tendency toward providing a list of assertions and observations.

Group Performance

When we look at our open-ended evaluative groups — race, community, and so on — we see that there were no dramatic differences between 9-year-old blacks and whites nor among students from advantaged-urban, disadvantaged-urban and rural communities. For 13-year-olds, blacks performed 3 to 6% below the nation, while students from disadvantaged-urban communities performed 1 to 10% below students from advantaged-urban communities. Students from rural areas performed slightly above students from disadvantaged communities, but 1.5 to 10 percentage points below students from advantaged-urban communities.

Seventeen-year-old black students performed 2 to 3 percentage points below their white counterparts on the open-ended evaluative tasks, and students from disadvantaged-urban communities performed 3 to 13 percentage points lower than those from advantaged communities.

Females tended to perform better than males at all three age levels. Differences were slight at age 9 and ranged from 3 to 6.5 points at age 13. Differences were more pronounced at age 17, ranging from 3 to 13%. There were few regional differences in performance on any of these questions across the age levels. Students whose parents had had more education generally performed better on these tasks across all age levels.

Conclusions

Results from the assessment of students' abilities to evaluate written works suggest a number of conclusions that parallel and reinforce those already reported for other aspects of writing about literary works. The major and overriding finding is that although students in each of the age groups assessed had little difficulty making judgments about what they read, most of them lacked even the most rudimentary procedures for explaining and defending their judgments through references either to the details of the texts or to the characteristics of their own responses and opinions. Instead, they either used stock assertions that can be applied indiscriminately across texts or they fell back upon restatements of the text without relating these summary statements to specific evaluative criteria.

In terms of instruction, each of these unsuccessful approaches to evaluative tasks can be seen as promising beginnings. The formulaic assertions could be treated as a framework for elaboration in the contexts of specific texts. If a story is "suspenseful," students could then be asked to summarize the details that contribute to the suspense; if a poem has "good rhythm," they could be asked to illustrate that rhythm and how it contributes to the effectiveness of the poem as a whole. Students who began with a summary or synopsis need to be shown how to work in the other direction — how to take the details that

they focused upon and relate them to specific evaluative criteria. At an abstract level, the responses to the items about "good story" and "good poem" make it clear that most students are at least aware of such criteria. What they seem to lack is practice in bringing the criteria together in systematic ways with details of form, content or their own responses. As we concluded earlier in examining ability to explain interpretations of text, students seem to lack experience in any sort of extended defense of their conclusions, whether through discussion that moves beyond brief question/answer routines or through writing tasks that move beyond short-answer or fill-in-the-blank formats.

Other conclusions from the evaluative items can be listed briefly:

- Responses were strongly influenced by the particular text under discussion, as well as by general categories of text such as story or poem.

- Students at all three ages assessed were able to cite some evaluative criteria, but older students were more specific in the criteria they cited and had a wider range of criteria upon which they drew.

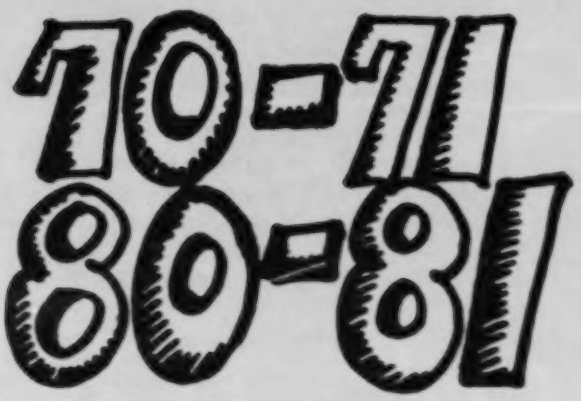
- The most popular criteria at all ages focused on aspects of the content of a text; similarly, attempts to explain judgments about particular texts focused on content, usually in the form of a summary or synopsis.

- Criteria that imply analysis of a text, as well as those involving generalizations about theme or message, where rarely used at any age, though they were cited somewhat more frequently by the older students.

CHAPTER 5

General Responding

Introduction



This final section reports findings about achievement in literature from the unstructured written responses of 13- and 17-year-olds. Students were given a poem or a story they had never seen before and asked to "write down your thoughts and feelings" or to "write a composition" about the poem or story. They were on their own with the texts. No other directions or questions of any kind structured or focused their responses. They had to create a meaning for the work, judge the appeal of it and then write a response. Such an expressed response tells us a great deal about readers' experiences with literature, the kinds of classroom discussions and writing assignments they have had and their thinking strategies for expressing their responses to literature.

Altogether we analyzed the written responses to four poems and one story. Since 13-year-olds and 17-year-olds wrote responses to two of the poems in both 1970-71 and 1979-80, we can report changes in the responses to those selections. Though the data reported here come from an analysis of the responses to all five works, the examples supplied in this chapter are taken from "Somebody's Son," a short, somewhat literal selection; "Check," a poem by James Stephens; and "Into My Heart," a poem by A.E. Housman.

Responses of both age groups at both assessment times can be compared because the same system was employed for analyzing the responses. This system is based on the content-analysis scheme used to describe responses in the 1970-71 literature assessment, a scheme developed by Alan Purves and Victoria Rippere (See **Elements of Writing About a Literary Work**, 1968). It makes possible a full account of a wide range of responses to a work, and it is particularly useful for identifying differences in response from one work to the next. It relies on the following categories of response:

Egocentric Responses are not text-based, but are text-relevant. Respondent writes a letter or poem of his/her own or writes another poem (or excerpts) that s/he has memorized. Other types of statements categorized here are: "I never read poetry," "I'm not good with poems" or "I love the beach — it helps me put my mind off things."

Retelling. Respondent summarizes or retells the poem (or story) or part(s) of it. This can include statements referencing specific words or lines. Inaccuracies are disregarded.

Emotional. Respondent attributes emotions or feelings of mood to the text or makes a direct statement of emotion. Examples would include: "The poem was sad," "It's touching," "It had a funny feeling," "It was very dramatic," "It gave a happy point of view" or "The ending makes you feel sorry for him."

Personal — global. Respondent gives personal reactions to genre and content in a global sense. Examples would be statements of the following type: "I like poems about nature," "I can relate to this poem," "I wish I could write poems like this" or "This is not my kind of poem."

Personal — analytic. Respondent gives personal reactions to content in an **analytic** sense — identification with characters, judgments about actions of characters and advice giving, observations about the way society should/does work. Respondent states, for example: "I might have felt the same thing," "It describes my feelings of moving to a new state" or "I feel that the poem is right by talking about the real problems of air pollution facing us."

Evaluation. Respondent judges the worth of the work. This also includes such statements as: "It is stupid," "I didn't like it," "It doesn't make sense," "It is nicely written" or "It is imaginative."

Other works — general. Respondent classifies the work as to genre or type and compares the poem to other types of works or art forms in **general**, such as: "It's not like a poem I've seen before" or "It is like a myth."

Other works — specific. Respondent compares the poem to a **specific** work that is mentioned by title, such as: "The **Bible** describes heaven this way."

Analysis — superficial. Respondent mentions **superficial** characteristics of the text. This includes concerns about format, for example: "The poem doesn't rhyme," "The poem seems more like a story," "It doesn't give the place and time," "The author uses imaginative language" or "There is a sense of lost beauty in the poem."

Analysis — elaborated. Respondent gives an **elaborated** or substantive discussion of any one of the following special features or literary devices: plot, character, setting, images, sounds, and so on. Included here are discussions of plot veracity and meaningfulness, such an: "Even though Housman wrote this poem in 1890, it is still pertinent and meaningful today" or "Each of us has memories of places and people we would like to relive, but which time will not allow us to."

Inferencing. Respondent goes beyond the text and provides motivations for characters or develops action. It includes text-based hypotheses of what did happen or predictions about what will happen, for example: "The author is longing for the home he once had" or "A.E. Housman seems to be talking about a country that has been badly damaged or destroyed."

Generalization. Respondent derives general meanings from the poem, such as: "Inside a man's heart live his fondest memories."

Though this system has 12 categories — a large number of discriminations to make in a content-analysis system — raters were able to use it after careful training, with high percentages of agreement — over 90% on each of the five responses to the four poems and one story. Raters coded each written response for the appearance of any 1 of these 12 response modes for the 17-year-olds and then coded the entire response for its predominant mode. The personal, other works and analytic categories were not split into subcategories for scoring 13-year-olds' responses; consequently, there are only 9 response categories at age 13. Predominant mode identifies the major thrust of the essay, the writer's essential, central concern in thinking and writing about the work.

For assessing reading, thinking and writing achievements, such a coding system has four special advantages.

1. It permits detailed description of what students do, given a chance to say what they want about a work of literature. It provides no judgment or evaluation of the response. The comprehensive description if offers does provide material, though, for judgments on our part about the patterns of response we observe.

2. It provides information about the response preferences or response styles of young readers. It shows what is common and what is rare in their responses and shows how response preferences change over time. This question of response preference is of special importance since recent research (Purves, 1973, 1981) has suggested that the chief result of literary education in American schools might be to teach not a particular range of reading abilities but a preferred way of talking and writing about fictions — movies, poems, stories, novels, plays.

3. This coding system for unstructured written responses lets us see how much congruence there is between the declared objectives of literary instruction in American schools and the responses of students to literary works when they are on their own without directions from the teacher. If schools claim to teach students to make thoughtful evaluations of what they read using examples from the work at hand or from other works to elaborate and support their evaluations, do they in fact do that when invited to say what they want about a work they have never seen before? If schools claim to encourage a wide range of responses to fictions, with each type of response developed in a way appropriate for that type, will 13-year-olds or 17-year-olds as groups display such a wide range of responses or do they consistenty shun some forms of response in favor of others? Are the ones they prefer the ones the schools claim to value and teach?

4. This coding system lets us describe both the content of the response and the probable thinking strategies by which the writer achieved the response. The written response is a selective part of the full response of reading, but it is a critically important part. Writing is not merely a record of a part of the response — it is a way of thinking about the response. In the act of writing, the readers **discover** responses. They find out what they think and feel about the work **as they write.** For this reason we can say that the written responses in this sample — limited as they may be by the test situation and the time constraints the students were very much aware of — reveal the probable thinking strategies involved in achieving these responses. With this coding scheme, we can see readily whether a response contains analysis, inferencing, generalizations, evaluations, comparisons or contrasts, examples, personal anecdotes, narrative retelling, and so on.

Results

First we present a complete profile of 17-year-olds' responses from the 1979-80 assessment. This section is necessarily lengthy because of the importance of illustrating findings with examples of students' writing. Then, in two briefer sections, the performances of 13-year-olds and 17-year-olds are compared and changes between 1970-71 and 1979-80 in responses to poems are described.

How 17-Year-Olds Respond

For the 1979-80 assessment, 17-year-olds wrote brief responses to the poem "Into My Heart" and to the story "Somebody's Son." Seventeen-year-olds also responded to two other poems; but since these may be used again to study changes in responses between this current assessment and the next one, they can be described only briefly here.

The story "Somebody's Son" is only about 250 words long, the first part a characterization of the son and the second longer part, his letter to his mother.

Read the story below. Then write down your thoughts and feelings about the story on the lines provided on the next two pages. We are interested in what you have to say, not your spelling and punctuation. You will have 9 minutes to read the story and write your response.

Somebody's Son

He sat, washed up on the side of the highway, a slim, sunbeaten driftwood of a youth. He was hunched on his strapped-together suitcase, chin on hands, elbows on knees, staring down the road. Not a car was in sight. Except for him, the dead, still Dakota plains were empty.

Now he was eager to write that letter he had kept putting off. Somehow, writing it would be almost like having company.

He unstrapped his suitcase and fished out a small unopened package of stationery from the pocket on the underside of the lid. Sitting down in the gravel of the roadside, he closed the suitcase and used it as a desk.

Dear Mom.

If Dad will permit, I would like to come home. I know there's little chance he will. I'm not going to kid myself. I remember he said once if I ever ran off I might as well keep on going.

All I can say is that I felt leaving home was something I had to do. Before even considering college, I wanted to find out more about life and about me and the best way for us (life and me) to live with each other. Please tell Dad — and I guess this'll make him sore all over again — I'm still not certain that college is the answer for me. I think I'd like to work for a time and think it over.

You won't be able to reach me by mail, because I'm not sure where I'll be next. But in a few days I hope to be passing by our place. If there's any chance Dad will have me back, please ask him to tie a white cloth to the apple tree in the south pasture — you know the one, the Grimes Golden beside the tracks. I'll be going by on the train. If there's no cloth on the tree I'll just quietly, and without any hard feelings toward Dad — I mean that — keep on going.

Love,
David

Housman's poem "Into My Heart" was first published in 1890:

Into my heart an air that kills
From yon far country blows:
What are those blue remembered hills.
What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content,
I see it shining plain.
The happy highways where I went
And cannot come again.

A.E. Housman, 1890

Write a composition in which you discuss this poem. We are more interested in what you have to say than in how you say it.

We will identify the two other poems as "Letter" and "Invitation" (these are not their real titles). "Letter" is addressed to a girl by a boy who once loved her. He explains why he is no longer in love with her and what that change will mean for them. The poem "Invitation" invites readers to move out into the world, to take risks and to be imaginative. It is organized around a central metaphor of opening a door and looking out.

Table 5-1 presents the results from a content analysis of responses to the four selections. The three poems are listed first, followed by the story at the bottom. For each selection, results are reported in two ways:

1. As percentages of papers in which the response category appeared. If a writer used this type of response in even one clause or sentence, his or her paper was coded for that response.

2. As percentages of papers for which this category identifies the predominant response mode. Here the results indicate the thrust of the response, its thesis or focus, the writer's main concern. This is not simply the type of response used in the majority of clauses or sentences but the writer's basic strategy or stance in responding, even if that is identified in just one sentence. This announcement of basic strategy may be followed by several sentences carrying out the strategy in a different response style. An example would be "generalization" followed by several sentences of "personal — analytic" statements. Another would be "evaluation" followed by several sentences of "retelling" or "elaborated analysis," or a mixture of the two.

Table 5-1.

Response/Writing Strategies in 17-Year-Olds' Written Responses to Three Poems and One Story, 1980

Works	Categories *												
	Ratable	EG	RT	EM	PR Analytic	PR Global	EV	OW General	OW Specific	AN Superf.	AN Elab.	IN	GEN
"Into My Heart"													
Percentages of papers in which this category appeared:	89.4%	5.7%	17.6%	4.1%	4.2%	1.0%	15.4%	0.4%	0.1%	4.8%	1.0%	76.2%	4.4%
Percentages of papers for which this category identifies the predominant response mode:	89.4	3.6	3.1	0.2	1.2	0.3	7.5	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.3	71.1	1.8
"Letter"													
Percentages of papers in which this category appeared:	97.3	5.7	68.8	19.3	28.9	3.3	37.5	2.9	0.2	7.4	0.3	51.8	3.1
Percentages of papers for which this category identifies the predominant response mode:	97.3	2.8	45.0	3.5	10.8	0.4	15.7	0.3	0.0	0.8	0.0	17.4	1.0
"Invitation"													
Percentages of papers in which this category appeared:	98.4	5.8	25.3	3.8	5.2	1.7	39.0	1.4	0.4	11.5	1.2	1.5	61.8
Percentages of papers for which this category identifies the predominant response mode:	98.4	1.3	13.3	0.3	1.1	0.3	23.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.1	0.8	56.8
"Somebody's Son"													
Percentage of papers in which this category appeared:	98.6	1.8	48.6	17.8	82.0	0.5	19.2	1.8	4.8	4.4	0.5	23.4	1.3
Percentage of papers for which this category identifies the predominant response mode:	98.6	1.1	18.7	1.2	67.2	0.1	6.0	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.1	3.1	0.3

*EG = egocentric
RT = retelling
EM = emotional
PR Analytic = personal analytic
PR Global = personal global
EV = evaluation
OW General = other works general
OW Specific = other works specific
AN Superf. = analytic superficial
AN Elab. = analytic elaborated
IN = inferencing
GEN = generalization

The first thing to notice in Table 5-1 is that over 97% of the responses to three of the selections were ratable. Presented with a literary selection they had never seen before and with only a few minutes to develop a written response, nearly all 17-year-olds were able to say something readable and ratable about the selection. Their responses indicate that they read the selection and understood it at least well enough to make some appropriate written response.

The second thing we notice in Table 5-1 is that the passage overwhelmingly determines the type of response. Considering just percentages of predominant response modes, we see that "Into My Heart" produced 71.1% inference responses; "Letter," 45.0% retelling; "Invitation," 56.8% generalizing; and "Somebody's Son," 67.2% personal analytic. No other predominant mode accounts for even half as many responses to any one of the selections. It seems clear that the particular characteristics of the selection — its theme, content, language and accessibility — determine the initial written response 17-year-olds will make. Though these are not results for the same individuals responding to all four selections, the results do call into question the current view that what American students learn in their English classes is a particular way of responding to literature (Purves, 1981). The difference in response mode is more than a difference in response to stories and poems: the three poems produced quite different responses.

It appears that the main characteristic of 17-year-olds' written responses to literature is flexibility. One work produced quite a different response from the next. It also appears that most 17-year-olds were capable of at least some analysis in terms of their own personal experience and of some inference and generalization.

Though each selection attracted a different predominant response mode, the content-analysis system does reveal some commonalities in the responses to the four selections. For example, it is not at all unusual to find statements of retelling, evaluation, emotion and inferencing together in individual responses. Other commonalities are the low incidence of egocentric, personal, global (other works), general (other works), specific, and either superficial analysis or elaborated analysis of the selection. Two major possibilities of response that 17-year-olds characteristically avoided were comparisons to other works and developed or elaborated analysis of literary features of individual works. Although we cannot conclude that 17-year-olds were unable to compare works or analyze works, it is apparent that when invited to respond as they prefer, even the most capable of them avoided these responses.

Response Modes

The next section of this report focuses on preferred response modes — personal analytic, retelling, evaluation, generalizing, elaborated analysis and inferencing — by looking at specific examples of students' responses within and across the various literary selections. After presenting this detailed account of preferred response modes, we turn our attention to students' responses to the more difficult poem, "Into My Heart." The last pages of this section then briefly summarize the findings for 17-year-olds.

As mentioned earlier, the most popular predominant response mode for "Somebody's Son" was personal analytic — analysis of characters and events in the story from the writer's personal perspective, not analysis of literary qualities. Within this mode, we see writers identifying with characters, judging their actions, even giving them advice and making observations about the way people are or the way the social order works. The following four examples of students' responses are representative of 17-year-olds' responses to "Somebody's Son" within this mode.

In the first example, the student analyzed both the father's behavior and David's behavior, concluding with what David should have done in his letter.

I feel that David's father is either very strict or else very stubborn, maybe both. Wanting his son to go to college so bad that he drives him away from home is not an adult way to handle a child's rejection of what a parent wants. David's father should have been able to sit down with David and discussed the matter as two reasonable and responsible adults.

David's way of trying to solve the problem by running away shows that in a way he too is stubborn. He should have realized that running away doesn't solve someone's problems, it only makes them bigger and harder to solve.

He started to get on the right path by writing home and asking to be able to come home again. The only thing he should have done different was to right the letter to his father, it would have shown that he cared and respected his father and his wishes, but that he had to make a few decisions himself.

In the second example, the student moved toward generalization in the second paragraph, but essentially relied on personal reflection and evaluation, as well as on advice-giving.

I think this is kind of a sad story, very true to life. The boy feels the way I do, wanting to find out about life and himself.

The only way to find out what's out there is to go out there yourself. One has to be an adventurer to find out about life's many facets. People who don't go out and explore life are just living in little boxes, always knowing tomorrow will be the same as today. It's easy to die of boredom the way most people live; always the same thing. Parents don't understand this need to explore.

The third response indicates strong identification with David and predicts a bad end for him.

I think this is a sad story. The dad makes me mad. He should let his son leave & come back if his son feels a need to go out in the world & find himself, then decide to come home. If he let his son come back, he (David) would feel more secure and may-be go to college if he had a little adult support behind him. (especially his father — because of the relationship a father & son usually have). Now David is just going to go on running and for the rest of his life he will probably be a tramp, with no food, or money, and finding small, dirty jobs that don't pay good. I don't see how the father can live with himself knowing what he is doing to his son by not letting him come back home.

The fourth response judges David harshly and conjectures about what might have happened had David not run away.

I feel that he was wrong to run away. No matter what his problem is he would have been able to work it out. By running away he hurt his parents and his father might not let him come back. You shouldn't run away from your problems you should try to face them and work them out. If he had stayed and talked about how he feels about going to college or not being sure that he wants to his father might have understood.

These four responses represent very well the full range of personal analytic responses in our sample. They illustrate the overwhelming attraction to personal analysis in responding to "Somebody's Son"; 67.2% of the responses were of this type. Seventeen-year-olds found David's plight realistic. They liked the story, and they found it close enough to their own experiences and concerns to be able to identify strongly with the situation and to have something to say about it. There may be some evaluating or generalizing and occasional short sections of retelling in these responses, but there is rarely any hint of analyzing any of the literary features of the story. A few students mentioned the similarity to the song "Tie a Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Old Oak Tree." Two of the examples (2 and 3) began with a brief statement of evaluation, and two (1 and 4) moved directly to personal analysis. The writers seem to have treated the events as real events, as though the selection

were a case study report rather than a short story. They were quick to judge and to advise. They seem to have felt they must propose a solution to the problem or to conjecture about how it might have turned out differently.

Because these responses are unique to this story, our comments should not be taken as conclusions about how 17-year-olds generally responded to literature. Indeed, one of our major findings is that these same writers would probably respond quite differently to a different kind of story or poem. Although we cannot claim that 17-year-olds predictabry analyzed what they read in personal terms, it is apparent that they did it readily to stories with people and events close to their own experience.

When we look behind the content of these personal analytic responses to their manner of development, to the thinking and writing strategies apparent in them, it is obvious that the responses do not go very deep. There was very little expression of tentativeness, ambiguity, exploration of various implications, judgment or conclusion. The typical sentence was an unqualified assertion. Though all of these writers know firsthand the complexities in family dramas, particularly the tension between parental authority and adolescent freedom, the papers revealed very little of this complexity. There was hardly any exploration or conjecture about motives: either David is to blame or the father is to blame or both are to blame and that is about it. The characters' motives are accounted for simply in terms of stubbornness, strictness, running away and rejection.

In terms of writing strategies, the writers characteristically relied on abstraction. Paper 4 is a good example of this: it is a series of assertions all at the same level of generality. The three sentences of the first paragraph in paper 1 are also typical: evaluation, judgment, advice, all at a high level of abstraction. Only occasionally is there a move downward to specifics, either from the story or from the writer's experience. One example of a move to specifics is toward the end of paper 2, where the writer specifies particular features of David's bleak future: "no food, or money, and finding small, dirty jobs that don't pay good." Another is the sustained development of the "need to explore" in the second paragraph of paper 2: the mention of "little boxes" and dying of boredom.

But these are exceptions. Even though the papers are coherent, they are not well developed. The wide range of writing strategies available to these writers — definition, example, analysis, anecdote, fact, detail — were hardly used. And while it is true that time was limited and the writing task mentions only "thoughts and feelings," we expected a fuller range of thinking and writing strategies.

Retelling

The next most common kind of response to "Somebody's Son" was retelling, the simple recounting of what happened in the story, with little, if any, referencing, analysis or generalization. This predominant response mode accounted for 18.7% of the responses. The following examples illustrate this kind of response:

> This boy was at the point where he felt like leaving home. He left and was sitting on the side of a highway in the Dakota Plains. He was somewhat lonely. He was not sure if leaving home was the right thing to do, so he wrote a letter to his parents, his mother preferably. He wanted to find out if his father would accept him back home. His father once said that if his son ever left he would not be able to come back. With his son knowing this he still wanted to come back overlooking what his father said. He wanted to come back because he was not certain what he wanted to do with his life yet.

> This is a story that is about a kid whose dad and him were arguring about college and he wasn't sure he wanted to go to college so he split and found out what life really is about and is sorry he left and wants to come back but his father said once that if he took off not to come back so he doesn't know if he can come back home.

These retelling responses were often complete (they surveyed all the main events of the narrative) and orderly (they followed the chronology of the narrative), but they seem a limited response to "Somebody's Son," even to the simple request to write about "thoughts and feelings." The retellings were not illustrations for inferences, evaluations or generalizations; they were simply retellings. For nearly 20% of the 17-year-olds responding to this story, a simple retelling was the predominant feature of their response. And except for the low incidence of retelling in response to "Into My Heart" (3.1%), retelling was always a popular response mode (as we see in Table 5-1), with 45.0% to "Letter" and 13.3% to "Invitation." While there was notable variation in retelling among these three current works ("Into My Heart," "Letter," "Invitation"), it appears that, on the average, retelling might account for up to one-fourth of 17-year-olds' written responses to unfamiliar works of literature.

Evaluation

While there were only a few evaluative responses (6.0%) to "Somebody's Son," other selections in the assessment attracted a higher proportion of evaluations (see Table 5-1) from 17-year-olds. They often appeared in a sentence or two embedded in responses that are predominantly in another mode. As we have seen earlier, it is not unusual for a response to open with a brief statement of evaluation and then move on to other matters.

The first two of four representative examples of evaluative responses indicate the characteristic brevity of evaluation. Instead of moving on from general evaluation to some other kinds of statements about the story, these writers remained where they began. The responses have a repetitive or additive quality.

> I don't really like the story. It is not very exciting, it is sort of boring. I'm not saying I hate it but it just isn't my kind of story. Thats all I have to say about it. Except that it is or could be true because there are probally a lot of kids in real life that are like the one in the story.

> I liked the story, but to me, because I heard the song first the story seemed to be a take off from the "Tie a Yellow Ribbon 'round the ol' Oak Tree." I also think it should have a different title and a ending because it leaves you curious as to whether or not Davids' Dad let him come home.

The third example, by contrast, was coherent and rather fully developed, rejecting the story for a great many different reasons.

> This story, while emotionally touching, relies heavily on stock response. It is guilty of sentimentality by going into excessive detail (eg "Except for him ... empty," "slim, sunbeaten driftwood") and by the using of words to evoke emotion (eg "hunched," "sunbeaten driftwood"). Very little is told about character or theme, and the story is predominantly plot. The plot itself is the "Tie a Yellow Ribbon" stereotype. There are no true allusions and few metaphors are used. In terms of literary criticism the story is poor, even judged as escape literature. While good for some diversionary reading, this story is not a very good one.

The fourth response was one of the most impressive and imaginative in the sample. There were very few responses like this. The writer skillfully implied dislike for the story in a list of quotations from imaginary reviews.

> Sentimentily devastating. A true tear jerker. (New York Times)
> Kurt Vonnegut Jr's. best ever!!! (L.A. Post)
> A truely amazing drama of an American experience. Uplifting for the whole family. (Dundalh Owl)
> The Acetylsalsilic acid experiment is as fulfilling as a deoxyribo neuclear acid schematic. (Popular Science)
> I hope there ain't a cloth. (Pessimist)
> I believe in miracles. (Christian Society)
> So good I had to read it again, honestly!
> Nine minutes is too long. If you don't mind suggestions. No I don't need more space.

Though we did not rate the evaluative responses for extent of elaboration or development, our impression from reading a great many of them is that about half were undeveloped. Papers 1 and 2 are examples. Again, using quite rough averages across all four works, as we did in the discussion of retelling earlier, we could reasonably conclude that 25-30% of the 17-year-olds chose to respond with either simple plot summary (retelling) or with unsupported judgment (evaluation). For more information about the criteria students used in their evaluations and the substance of their evaluative remarks, see Chapter 4.

Generalizing

Except in responses to "Invitation," where it accounted for 56.8% of the responses, there was very little sustained generalization in 17-year-olds' responses to the texts. In this sort of response, the writer is concerned with what the work might mean in a general way. The response is noticeably less personal than in papers classed as personal analytic. The following are two examples of this response strategy:

> I feel that the story was meant to teach teenagers that they will learn about life when the time comes. They should not run away and go out alone until they fully can understand and accept the responsibilities they must meet to live on their own. In this case David decided to go out on his own without his parent's approval, before it was his time to do this. Now he wants to go back because the challenge is to great for him. This paragraph also shows that parents should not force a child to do things they don't want to, as it appears that David is scared of his father because he does not want to go to college.

> I think that this story is very touching. It shows something, I feel, is rarely seen, someone willing to admit they may have made a mistake. Most people wouldn't do that.
>
> I also feel that this story gives an example that you can't always have things like you want them to be. In other words, things aren't always as you plan them, they mabe better or worse.
>
> David realizes he may have been a bit wrong and he admits that. I think this took a great deal of courage. He knows that he may not be able to go home again, but he seems to be willing to accept it if he cannot.

Notice that in both of these examples retelling was used to develop the major generalizations that are the focus of each response. However, very few generalization responses displayed thinking and writing strategies beyond simple retelling. Data in Table 5-1 for "Invitation" illustrate this claim very nicely. "Invitation" was the only work that invited a high percentage (56.8%) of generalization as a predominant response mode (second row of figures under "Invitation"). Looking at the incidence of all response strategies in individual papers (first row of figures under "Invitation"), we see that evaluative responses appeared in 39.0% of the papers, retelling in 25.3% and superficial analysis in 11.5%. The appearance of strategies other than retelling and superficial analysis that would indicate development of generalizations—personal analytic, elaborated analysis or other works (specific)—was so sparse as to be hardly worth mentioning. Again, as was the case with personal analytic responses above, the responses were weak and poorly developed.

Elaborated Analysis

Finally, the responses to "Somebody's Son" illustrate one type of response that 17-year-olds consistently avoided: elaborated analysis of features of the story as a literary text. Both the following examples are excerpts from slightly longer responses; and while they are refreshing and precise, they are, nevertheless, rare exceptions among the responses 17-year-olds wrote.

I like the symbolism used at the first of the story. A runaway teenager really can be compared to a piece of driftwood. He just gets "washed" from here to there with the flow of things. The way that David is described sitting there on the side of the road the reader can picture it easily.

The opening of this passage is very descriptive and gives a clear impression of what David must have looked like on the Dakota highway. I think that driftwood is an appropriate choice of words, for David has left home and is drifting from town to town. The plains being empty suit his mood. He is empty, without resources and ready to go home.

We now turn our attention to a small selection of responses to the A.E. Housman poem "Into My Heart." This poem is quite different as a literary text from "Somebody's Son." It is compact and metaphorical, not discursive or literal. It deals with a theme closer to the experience of aging adults—acute longing for remembered scenes and events—than to adolescents. It is allusive and indirect: the reader must understand "air that kills" and "lost content."

Write a composition in which you discuss this poem. We are more interested in what you have to say than in how you say it.

> Into my heart an air that kills
> From yon far country blows:
> What are those blue remembered hills.
> What spires, what farms are those?
>
> That is the land of lost content,
> I see it shining plain.
> The happy highways where I went
> And cannot come again.
>
> A.E. Housman, 1890

Nearly all of the ratable responses to "Into My Heart" were inferencing (71.1%). The difficulty of the poem seemed to require readers immediately to adopt an inferencing strategy. Since the experience of the speaker in the poem was not close to their own experience, they rarely used personal analytic (the favored response mode to "Somebody's Son") or generalization.

These three following examples are representative. Two interpret the poem as a contrast of industrialization and urbanization with country life, one as remembered war scenes. Many students interpreted "air that kills" to mean air pollution.

I don't really understand what it is about. Now that I read it again, I think I can try to analyze it though. It's about how industrialized the country was getting. How highways replaced dirt roads and how big cities replaced little towns. This person, A.E. Housman, seemed sad that this was happening. I'm not really sure if this is correct but I made a try at it.

The poem is talking about a person that has just went through some kind of war or battle in their homeland and that person is describing what the land and surroundings looked like after the war was over. Everything has changed, somehow different. The nice surroundings are lost forever. The war will always be remembered. It could have been a war between two countries.

In this poem the author is reminiscing about the past. He remembers the farm country and how he was happy and content there. He remembers all of this, but knows he cannot go back to it. I think he is referring to how country land was changed into a city and the air that kills might mean air pollution.

These responses indicate a sensitivity to the tone of sadness and regret in the poem, and they offer a consistent, focused interpretation. However, the writing strategies selected to develop the interpretation were quite limited. Very few writers used any forms of analysis (see Table 5-1). Almost none mentioned other works. The papers were characteristically a series of inferencing assertions, all at the same level of abstraction.

What does all this reveal, then, about the initial written responses to literature of 17-year-olds?

- Even with severe time constraints, they were able to formulate in writing a coherent, readable, brief response to a written work.
- The focus of their response, its predominant response mode, was heavily dependent on the work of literature: a discursive work close to students' own experience produced

personal analysis, while a metaphoric work dealing with unfamiliar themes produced inferencing.

- Favored response modes were personal analysis, generalization, inferencing and retelling.
- Disfavored response modes were comparisons to other works and literary analysis.
- Responses were not developed or elaborated and displayed a limited range of thinking and writing strategies. Seventeen-year-olds were able to analyze in terms of their personal experience, to interpret and to generalize; but they seldom developed or supported these higher-level responses.
- At least one-quarter of the responses were limited to retelling the story or to unsupported evaluation.

We now turn to a comparison of responses of 13- and 17-year-olds.

Differences in Responses of 13- and 17-Year-Olds

Table 5-2 summarizes the results of the content analysis of 13- and 17-year-olds' responses to the two unreleased poems "Letter" and "Invitation" and to the released story "Somebody's Son." Data for 17-year-olds in this table are the same as in Table 5-1.

Table 5-2.

Response/Writing Strategies in 13- and 17-Year-Olds' Written Responses in 1979-80 to Two Poems and One Story

Works	Ages	Categories*											
		Retable	EG	RT	EM	PR Analytic	PR Global	EV	OW General	OW Specific	AN Superf.	AN Elab.	IN	GEN
"Letter"														
Percentages of papers in which this category appeared:	13	95.8%	9.6%	56.0%	25.9%	28.7%	—	51.0%	5.6%	—	11.5%	—	36.9%	2.4%
	17	97.3	5.7	68.8	19.3	28.9	3.3%	37.5	2.9	0.2%	7.4	0.3%	51.8	3.1
Percentages of papers for which this category identifies the predominant response mode:	13	95.8	3.9	30.4	6.8	10.4	—	32.7	0.6	—	1.3	—	8.8	0.8
	17	97.3	2.6	45.0	3.5	10.6	0.4	15.7	0.3	0.0	0.8	0.0	17.4	1.0
"Invitation"														
Percentages of papers in which this category appeared:	13	97.2	8.0	40.8	10.9	6.2	—	62.5	4.2	—	16.9	—	0.0	26.0
	17	98.4	5.8	25.3	3.6	5.2	1.7	39.0	1.4	0.4	11.5	1.2	1.5	61.8
Percentages of papers for which this category identifies the predominant response mode:	13	97.2	2.2	22.6	1.8	1.9	—	43.5	0.3	—	3.1	—	0.0	21.8
	17	98.4	1.3	13.3	0.3	1.1	0.3	23.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.1	0.8	56.8
"Somebody's Son"														
Percentages of papers in which this category appeared:	13	97.3	5.0	42.4	21.0	74.0	—	22.7	4.1	—	4.7	—	29.1	1.2
	17	98.6	1.6	48.6	17.6	82.0	0.5	19.2	1.8	4.8	4.4	0.5	23.4	1.3
Percentages of papers for which this category identifies the predominant response mode:	13	97.3	3.9	16.8	3.5	56.8	—	9.9	0.3	—	0.9	—	5.1	0.2
	17	98.6	1.1	18.7	1.2	67.2	0.1	6.0	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.1	3.1	0.3

*EG = egocentric
RT = retelling
EM = emotional
PR Analytic = personal analytic
PR Global = personal global
EV = evaluation
OW General = other works general
OW Specific = other works specific
AN Superf. = analytic superficial
AN Elab. = analytic elaborated
IN = inferencing
GEN = generalization

Considering first any age differences in predominant response mode (the third and fourth rows of figures under each work), it appears that for the two poems a different mode predominated for each age group: for "Letter," 17-year-olds preferred retelling while 13-year-olds preferred evaluation with retelling close behind; for "Invitation," 17-year-olds preferred generalizing while 13-year-olds preferred evaluating. By far the most common response among 13-year-olds was evaluation. Comments of evaluation were more likely to appear in all their papers, whatever the predominant response mode. For "Somebody's Son," both 17-year-olds and 13-year-olds preferred personal analytic responses.

In general, the responses of 13-year-olds were much more likely to contain statements of evaluation. They also consistently included a slightly higher percentage of egocentric comments, though it remains a small proportion of the total. Their responses to the two poems were much less likely to contain generalizing and inferencing.

Though the response patterns for the two age groups are not at all sharply different, there is a gradual decrease in evaluative responses across the high school years and a slight increase in inferencing and generalizing responses. We would have predicted such a shift. Except for these small differences observable in Table 5-2, our general impression from reading a great many responses from both age groups is that the 17-year-olds are not much more capable than the 13-year-olds of developing and elaborating their responses. Indeed, Table 5-2 indicates that the response of a 17-year-old is no more likely to contain analysis (personal, superficial) or reference to other works than the response of a 13-year-old.

Results: Differences in Responses Between 1970-71 and 1979-80

Was there any change in 13- and 17-year-olds' response strategies during the decade of the seventies? In both 1970 and 1979, 13-year-olds wrote responses to the poem "Check" by James Stephens, and 17-year-olds wrote responses to "Into My Heart." The latter is reproduced earlier in this chapter. "Check" is reproduced below:

You are going to be asked to write a composition about a poem. I will read the poem to you as you read it to yourself. When we have read the poem carefully, write a composition in which you discuss the poem. We are more interested in what you have to say than in how well you say it. Put the title of the poem at the top of the next page.

Check

The Night was creeping on the ground!
She crept and did not make a sound,

Until she reached the tree: And then
She covered it, and stole again

Along the grass beside the wall!
— I heard the rustling of her shawl

As she threw blackness everywhere
Along the sky, the ground, the air,

And in the room where I was hid!
But, no matter what she did

To everything that was without
She could not put my candle out!

So I stared at the Night: And she
Stared back solemnly at me!

James Stephens

Table 5-3 displays the results of the content analysis. Between 1970 and 1979, for 13-year-olds, there was a marked drop in the number of papers with retelling as the predominant response mode and a substantial increase in papers with evaluation as the predominant mode. There was also an increase in superficial analysis. The main finding for 13-year-olds is simply less retelling and more evaluation.

How good are these new evaluations? We cannot be certain, but the data in Chapter 4 and in Table 5-3 do not hint at any increase in percentages of papers with strategies (the first two rows under "Check") we would expect to find in evaluations that were justified and supported. The drop in retelling is not offset by anything that suggests noticeable improvements in other kinds of achievement—that is, by more elaborate and mature thinking and writing strategies.

Table 5-5.

Changes in Response/Writing Strategies of 13- and 17-Year-Olds Between 1970-71 and 1979-80

Works	Years	Categories *												
		Retable	EG	RT	EM	PR Analytic	PR Global	EV	OW General	OW Specific	AN Superf.	AN Elab.	IN	GEN
"Check" (age 13)														
Percentages of papers in which this category appeared:	1970-71	88.9%	4.1%	76.8%	7.9%	3.3%	—	28.9%	1.5%	—	15.3%	—	0.1%	1.7%
	1979-80	90.2	6.3	69.5	11.8	4.9	—	35.1	2.6	—	21.5	—	0.0	1.1
Percentages of papers for which this category identifies the predominant response mode:	1970-71	88.9	2.3	66.2	0.8	0.5	—	15.6	0.1	—	2.6	—	0.0	0.8
	1979-80	90.2	3.9	56.7	1.5	0.8	—	21.1	0.4	—	5.3	—	0.0	0.4
"Into My Heart" (age 17)														
Percentages of papers in which this category appeared:	1970-71	91.7	3.1	25.5	2.2	5.8	0.8%	6.9	0.4	0.9%	3.6	2.1%	87.0	4.7
	1979-80	89.4	5.7	17.6	4.1	4.2	1.0	15.4	0.4	0.1	4.8	1.0	76.2	4.4
Percentages of papers for which this category identifies the predominant response mode:	1970-71	91.7	1.9	3.3	0.0	1.8	0.2	2.5	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.5	79.9	1.1
	1979-80	89.4	3.6	3.1	0.2	1.2	0.3	7.5	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.3	71.1	1.8

*EG = egocentric
RT = retelling
EM = emotional
PR Analytic = personal analytic
PR Global = personal global
EV = evaluation
OW General = other works general
OW Specific = other works specific
AN Superf. = analytic superficial
AN Elab. = analytic elaborated
IN = inferencing
GEN = generalization

For 17-year-olds during the 1970s, there was a large decrease in inferencing responses. The only offsetting increases were in the egocentric and evaluative categories. The former nearly doubled, though it remained small as a proportion of total responses. The latter tripled. Again, Table 5-3 offers no evidence that the increase in evaluation represents an increase in elaborated evaluations rather than the simple assertive ones we saw previously for "Somebody's Son" (evaluation papers 1 and 2). In fact, there were slight decreases in the percentages of papers with any mention of analysis (personal or elaborated) or of other works (other works specific).

What is the meaning of 17-year-olds' drift away from inferencing toward evaluation? We can only conclude that they—and 13-year-olds as well—are more likely at the end of the decade than at the beginning to make judgments rather than to interpret and analyze.

APPENDIX A

Members of the Reading/Literature Advisory Committee

Richard K. Barksdale, University of Illinois at Urbana
Isabel Beck, University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Charles R. Cooper, University of California at San Diego
Stephen A. Dunning, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor
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Gloria Kuchinskas, Florida Department of Education
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Beverly Roller, Jefferson County Public Schools, Colorado
Robert Schreiner, University of Minnesota at Minneapolis
Dorothy Strickland, Columbia University, New York
Richard Venezky, University of Delaware at Newark
Seymour Yesner, Public Schools of Brookline, Massachusetts

APPENDIX B

Average Percentages of Scorers' Agreement for 1979-80 Open-Ended Scoring, by Age Groups

Title	Average % of Agreement		
	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17
"Somebody's Son"	—	95.0	95.0
"Somebody's Son" (essay)	—	95.0	93.0
"A Story of a Good Dog"	—	95.0	94.0
"One of These Days"	—	—	94.0
"Old Dog"	98.0	91.0	—
"Mother to Son"	—	91.0	91.0
"I was you"	—	—	93.0
Good story	98.0	93.0	94.0
Good poem	98.0	96.0	94.0
"Check"	—	96.5	—
"Into My Heart"	—	—	96.5
"As the Cat"	96.5	—	—
"The Closing of the Rodeo"	—	94.0	94.0

APPENDIX C

Exercises and Scoring Guides

1. Somebody's Son Exercise: Format 1

Read the story below and then answer the questions on the next two pages.

Somebody's Son

He sat, washed up on the side of the highway, a slim, sunbeaten driftwood of a youth. He was hunched on his strapped-together suitcase, chin on hands, elbows on knees, staring down the road. Not a car was in sight. Except for him, the dead, still Dakota plains were empty.

Now he was eager to write that letter he had kept putting off. Somehow, writing it would be almost like having company.

He unstrapped his suitcase and fished out a small unopened package of stationery from the pocket on the underside of the lid. Sitting down in the gravel of the roadside, he closed the suitcase and used it as a desk.

Dear Mom,

If Dad will permit, I would like to come home. I know there's little chance he will. I'm not going to kid myself. I remember he said once if I ever ran off I might as well keep on going.

All I can say is that I felt leaving home was something I had to do. Before even considering college, I wanted to find out more about life and about me and the best way for us (life and me) to live with each other. Please tell Dad—and I guess this'll make him sore all over again—I'm still not certain that college is the answer for me. I think I'd like to work for a time and think it over.

You won't be able to reach me by mail, because I'm not sure where I'll be next. But in a few days I hope to be passing by our place. If there's any chance Dad will have me back, please ask him to tie a white cloth to the apple tree in the south pasture—you know the one, the Grimes Golden beside the tracks. I'll be going by on the train. If there's no cloth on the tree I'll just quietly, and without any hard feelings toward Dad—I mean that—keep on going.

Love,
David

A. Why did David write the letter?

- ☐ To tell his mother that he had decided to go to college
- ■ To get his father's approval to return home
- ☐ To ask his parents to send him money
- ☐ To let his parents know he was leaving home
- ☐ I don't know.

B. When does David hope to be riding by his home?

- ■ In a few days
- ☐ In two weeks
- ☐ Next year
- ☐ Never
- ☐ I don't know

C. What kind of person does David think his father is?

- ■ Stubborn and unbending
- ☐ Weak and uncertain
- ☐ Easygoing and carefree
- ☐ Fair and understanding
- ☐ I don't know.

D. Think about the story again. What kind of person is David? Describe David in a few words on the line below.

E. What was it about the story that led you to describe David the way you did in Question D? Write your answer on the lines below.

Scoring Guide—Responding to Literature
Explaining Responses to Literature

Inferencing—Character
"Somebody's Son"
H-401000-B1B-2, 3
Age 13, Package 10, Exercise 3
Age 17, Package 10, Exercise 6

General Scoring Rationale: Since the responding to literature objective was formulated to address "deliberate, conscious kinds of interpretation," a successful response not only should identify a character trait appropriate to David but also should explain the given interpretation by relating it to the text. Evidence can be given by citing specific events in the text or special aspects of the construction of the text.

NOTE: Rating should, in general, be done by taking the entire student response into consideration without regard to what is actually written in the space provided for the first part and for the second part of the response. If reasons (substantial) are given in the first part, they are valid. The same is true for character traits identified in the second part. Caution should, however, be used, as this often leads to a tendency to rewrite the responses. Categorizations should reflect, as closely as possible, what respondents actually wrote.

Scoring Guide Categories:

I. **First Categorization** — Identification and substantiation of character traits. This takes into account **both** open-ended parts.

1 = **Unable to identify character traits.** Respondents do not do the task. They refer to the text, but do not answer even the first question.

A. Only an opinion about the action of the character is offered, such as: "David shouldn't have left home."

B. Some material is quoted from the text with no clear identification of character (including quoting title).

C. The identification and substantiation of character seem unrelated to the text.

D. An observation about the story is made, for example: "The title is misleading."

2 = **Character trait identified without substantiation.** Respondents name something but cannot go on. They identify a character trait(s) but do not substantiate the choice(s) with evidence from the text. Responses tend to provide: 1) circular evidence, 2) a copy or close paraphrase of the text, 3) vague reasons, or 4) only a subjective reaction as substantiation.

3 = **Character trait identified and substantiated with minimal evidence.** Respondents identify a character trait(s) and substantiate their choice(s) with **only one** reason or piece of evidence related to the text.

A. Reason can be directly related to the text, for example: "Nice, he wants to come home."

B. Reason can be inferred from the text.

C. Reason can be inaccurate, if it is related to the text, for example: "Smart, since he finally decided to go to college."

D. Reason can be based on personal experience that is related to the text.

E. Reason can be unusual, such as: "Sunburned from sitting out on the road," or "Lost, out in the road with no one around for miles."

F. Reason can refer to (but not retell) specific places in the text, for example: "The letter" is not specific enough. Also, referring to the place where specific adjectives were quoted from is merely a circular reason.

4 = **Character trait identified and substantiated.** Respondents identify character trait(s) and substantiate their choice(s) with **at least two** reasons or pieces of evidence related to the text. However, the evidence may be presented in an ambiguous fashion or be of the types described in 3C-3F. Reasons must be distinct — not instances of the same reason such as: "It had sad parts not any happy parts." This is a restatement of the same reason. Other instances of single reasons are when it takes two bits of information to make a single point, for example: (wanted to think things over) "He said he wanted to come home, but he didn't think he was ready for college."

5 = **Character trait identified and substantiated in a coherent fashion.** Respondents identify character trait(s) and substantiate their choice(s) with **at least two** reasons or pieces of evidence **clearly** related to the text — directly related or can be readily inferred. The reasons are presented logically and coherently.

NOTE: The following types of papers were classified as indicated and received no further scoring:

0 = **No response.**

7 = **Illegible or illiterate.**

8 = **Totally off task.**

9 = **"I don't know."**

II **Second Categorization** — The source of the evidence. Code presence or absence for each of the following:

1 = **Content.** The evidence is based on the content of the text.

2 = **Form.** The evidence is based on the language, style or construction of the text.

3 = **Subjective reactions.** These are responses that judge the worth of all or part of the text, such as: "It was interesting" or "It was monotonous." Personal opinions about the actions of the characters are stated, such as: "David should not have run away" or references to the moral of the story or general philosophical statements are made.

NOTE: Content and form can be present **only** if primary categorization is a "3" through "5"; subjective reactions can be present in papers categorized "2" through "5."

III. **Third Categorization** — A count of the number of reasons or pieces of evidence. Categorization for the count of details is as follows: (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7 or more). NOTE: This count **only** applies to papers with primary categorization of "3" through "5"; subjective reactions should not be counted as reasons or evidence.

Somebody's Son Exercise: Format 2

"Somebody's Son" was also presented to 13- and 17-year-olds with the following instructions.

Read the story below. Then write down your thoughts and feelings about the story on the lines provided on the next two pages. We are interested in what you have to say, not your spelling and punctuation. You will have 9 minutes to read the story and write your response.

Responses were scored with the following guide.

Scoring Guide — Responding to Literature

General Responding
"Somebody's Son"
H-402000-B1B-2, 3
Age 13, Package 9, Exercise 4

General Scoring Rationale: There are several major ways to deepen understanding of a written work. Respondents can use awareness of emotional impact, personal experience and knowledge of other works to interpret, provide meaning, evaluate and analyze the text. A content analysis of the responses not only provides information about which internal resources respondents tend to draw upon to help their understanding of written works, but also the cognitive skills they choose to demonstrate when given an opportunity to respond freely. It is expected that the results may be highly text dependent. Also, the better responses should move beyond plot summary and retelling to provide meaning, evaluation and particularly analysis.

Scoring Guide Categories:

Descriptive information: Code each type as present or absent. Code one type as predominant.

EG = Egocentric. Responses are not text based, but are text relevant. Respondent writes a letter or story of his own or writes another story (or excerpts) that he has memorized. Other types of statements categorized here are: "I never read stories"; "I'm not good with stories"; or "I'm sorry to run out on you, I don't want to go to college, either."

PR = Personal. Respondent identifies with characters, makes judgments about actions of characters or gives advice, for example: "I might have done the same thing," "David shouldn't have left home," "His father should take him back," "Hopefully his father will tie the cloth on the tree," or statements, such as: "I like stories like that" or "This is not my kind of story."

EM = Emotional. Respondent attributes emotions to the text or makes a direct statement of emotion, for example: "The story was sad," "It's touching," "It had a funny feeling," "It was very dramatic," or "I felt sorry for the boy."

RT = Retelling. Respondent summarizes or paraphrases the story (or parts of it) using specific words from the story. Respondent gives a synopsis, overview or brief description of the story or part(s) of it. (Disregard inaccuracies.)

IN = Inferencing. Respondent goes beyond the text and provides motivations for characters, for example: "David learned a lesson," "David's parents needed him to help pay the bills," or "David feels that his father doesn't love him."

GN = Generalization. Respondent attributes meanings to the story, for example: "Go out and try new things," "It shows that people have feelings that can be hurt and people are the ones that hurt each other," or "Everyone knows you can't run away from your problems."

AN = Analysis. Respondent discusses the language and/or structure of the story, for example: "It could have more details and not so many long words," "I didn't see any misspelled words," "It wasn't long enough," or "The author uses imaginative language."

OW = Other works. Respondent classifies the work as to genre or type and compares the story to other works or art forms, such as: "It's not like a story I've seen before," or "I think it's a good soap opera."

EV = Evaluation. Respondent judges the worth of the work, for example: "It was stupid," "I don't like it," "I didn't understand it," "It doesn't make sense," "It is nicely written," "It was not exciting or sad," "It has no meaning," or "It is imaginative."

NOTE: In addition to the papers which were considered ratable (1 = ratable) and which were analyzed using the categories described above, some papers were not considered ratable, and these were placed in one of the following classifications:

0 = No response.
2 = Nonratable. Copies or circular.
7 = Illegible, illiterate.
8 = Totally off-task.
9 = "I don't know."

2. Good Dog Exercise

Read the story which begins below and then answer the questions on the four pages following it.

A Story of a Good Dog

A man I used to know very well told me this story. He was a very truthful kind of man, but he used to elaborate things more than a bit, and perhaps he elaborated a bit on this.

Everybody, said he, has a best cat or dog that remains in the mind when other very dear memories have faded, and one says with complete assurance: "That was the best dog." There were Tommy and Guzzle and Spot, and they were all such good dogs that it is hard to believe there could be any better, but my best dog had not got a name at all; he answered to a very low whistle. He never barked; he never made any noise of any kind, except that, now and again, he gave a kind of whispered gargle away down in his innards — you could hardly hear it — and that showed the top of his delight. Poor old fellow, he hadn't much to be delighted about: he was just delighted to be delighted.

This is how we met. It was evening, and I was going up a street and down a street. I was looking for something. Among other things I was looking for a job, but this time I was looking for something else — and suddenly I saw it. It was in a dog's mouth: it was nearly half a loaf of bread, and the dog was slinking up an alley with it. He was a large terrier kind of dog, and I began stalking him for my share of whatever he had. I stalked him to the end of the alley, and he whispered a few very low grunts at me. "Drop it," said I, and he dropped it.

He sat down a few steps away, and he looked at the bread, and he looked at me, and then he scratched himself, and then he looked at the bread again. I broke the half-loaf into fairly even pieces, and I handed him the larger half. He looked at me, and he looked at the bread, and I could see that he was trying to work out where the catch was. Then he scratched himself with some fury, and when I began to eat, he began to eat. He would stop every now and then to take a good look at me, and then he made that curious whispered gargle of delight away down in his innards, and then he started again on the bread.

How good that bread was! I remember thinking that cake was not half as delicious as bread, and that this bread was the best that ever was baked; I could have eaten a hundred loaves of it, and then I could have eaten the dog.

It was evening and darkish, so I hunched myself up for sleep just where I was, and the dog, very cautiously, came to me, and at last tightened himself up against me, and he gargled a little and scratched himself nearly all night. I didn't care about anything. I had a friend; and he cared less, for he had a friend too.

In the morning I saw what all the scratching was about. He was covered from head to foot with mange. He was almost a solid mass of scabs. One of his eyes was blind. He was about three years younger than I was—that is, he was rather old, and he looked at me out of his one goodish eye with the kindly adoration that a good dog reserves for its best pup. He knew that I was an incompetent person, and he was very glad of that, for he had made up his mind that he would feed me by day and keep me warm by night.

It was winterish, and rainish, and darkish, and we wandered together up a place and down a place, and we kept carefully out of everybody's way. I didn't want people because they wouldn't give me a job, and he didn't want people because they heaved rocks at him.

For more than two months, whatever I ate he brought me. He was marvelously skillful. He knew where bits of bread grew. Sometimes there wasn't any, but most days there was a bit. I should have been very hungry, but in those days my mind moved around at about a mile a minute and it hated stomachs.

One morning my good dog set out hunting as usual. Then, having gone but a few steps, he stopped. He came back and pushed his head against me. Then he moved away again, and stopped again. And then, suddenly, he lifted his head to the sky and howled—the first sound I had ever heard him make! He howled and howled as though he were trying to howl himself dead. My heart nearly burst with terror. I ran to him and took his head into my arms, whispering love words to him, and as I looked into his face I saw what was wrong.

His other eye was gone. He was quite blind. He couldn't go hunting. He wasn't howling about himself; he was howling because he couldn't nose out something for me to eat. He cared no more about himself than I, at that moment, cared about me. He wanted to howl himself dead, but my arms coaxed him, and in a little while he stood silent and shivering.

I picked him up—he was not a light dog—and I walked and walked and walked. There were fields on one side, with a dull sky over them, over us; the world was a box, and we were two rats in a trap. I came to a small place, and saw a druggist's shop in it; the door was open. I put the dog down behind the door and walked in. There was a man—perhaps ten years older than I—behind the counter, and I said to him, "Please, will you kill my dog for me, without hurting him?"

He was a hard-faced, tough man, and he looked me up and down with eyes that were like bullets.

"What will you pay me with?" said he.

"I have no money," I answered.

"I've no painless poison," said he.

I looked at the rows of bottles on the counter and on the walls, and my next words were inspired; they were even crafty.

"You are a very wise man," I said. "There is nothing of this kind that you couldn't do."

His eyes became eyes again.

"What's wrong with the dog?" said he.

"He is old and blind and dying of the mange."

"Where is the creature?"

I pointed and he went to look.

"Good God Almighty," said he, as he stared at the crouching dog. "Take that thing away."

I followed him into the shop.

"Listen," said I, "that is the best dog in the world. He has fed me for over two months."

"You ate out of that thing's mouth?" said he.

"Yes," I answered. "He went blind this morning, and he is dying of horror because he can't feed me."

The man looked at me as if I were crazy.

"You know how to do everything," I said. "Do this for the best dog in the world."

He turned briskly, took up a pile of papers, and placed them on the floor. "Stretch him on that," he ordered. I picked my dog up—he was all one jelly of trembling terror.

The man went behind his counter, and in about five minutes he came back again, carrying a bowl.

"Good God!" said he, as he looked at the dog, and then his face went gentle. "There is warm milk and bread and sugar—dogs love sugar," he added, "and there is just enough of something else that will end his troubles in no time."

I put the bowl to my dog's nose. He smelled, and smelled again, and then, with an astonishing joy, he began to lap and eat while I petted him. He was tasting a kind of food that perhaps he hadn't tasted for six or seven years. Not since his master of long ago had thrown him out, and flung rocks at him till he left.

"Take him down to the fields," said the man. "He'll be gone in less than half an hour."

So I sat among the bushes with him, and he began doing and undoing things; he began to go asleep and he began to waken up, and he began to gargle joyfully, and then he began to forget these things, and all things.

He forgot blindness and age and fear. He forgot hunger, he forgot me, he forgot to scratch himself, he forgot life itself. He stretched himself a little, luxuriously, and then a small shiver ran all over him, and he was gone.

I pushed him deeply into the bushes, and walked away, pretty lonely again, but I think you will agree that when I say he was my best dog, I am not making any mistake in that very important matter.

Shortly after that I got a job — said the man who told me this story.

Source Information: "A Story of a Good Dog" as reprinted in SEA GREEN HORSE edited by Barbara Howes and Gregory Smith was originally published in JAMES, SEUMAS AND JACQUES, UNPUBLISHED WRITINGS OF JAMES STEPHENS, edited by Lloyd Frankenberg. Copyright © 1964 by Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. Copyright © 1962, 1964 by Iris Clare Wise. Reprinted by permission of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.

A. How was the death of the dog described?

- ☐ As violent and fearful
- ☐ As painful and lonely
- ■ As painless and peaceful
- ☐ As elaborate and ceremonious
- ☐ I don't know.

B. In their writing, authors sometimes make use of similes — direct comparisons of two unlike things. The following is an example of a simile:

The girl ran as fast as a deer.

Which one of the following lines from the story is also an example of a simile?

- ■ ...he looked me up and down with eyes that were like bullets.
- ☐ ...and then I could have eaten the dog.
- ☐ It was winterish, and rainish, and darkish...
- ☐ ...he was trying to work out where the catch was.
- ☐ I don't know.

C. What kind of person was the man who lived with the dog?

- ☐ Content and satisfied
- ☐ Lazy and shiftless
- ☐ Unfeeling and selfish
- ■ Caring and sensitive
- ☐ I don't know.

D. This exercise part was not included in analysis because no single correct answer was identifiable.

E. In their writing, authors sometimes make use of hyperbole — language characterized by excessive exaggeration. The following is an example of hyperbole:

The boy was so tall his head touched the clouds.

Which one of the following lines from the story is also an example of hyperbole?

- ☐ Then he scratched himself with some fury, and when I began to eat, he began to eat.
- ☐ ...then he made that curious whispered gargle of delight away down in his innards, and then he started again on the bread.
- ☐ How good that bread was! I remember thinking that cake was not half as delicious as bread...
- ■ ...this bread was the best that ever was baked, I could have eaten a hundred loaves of it...
- ☐ I don't know.

F. What emotions and feelings did you have when you read this story? Describe your feelings in a few words on the line below.

G. What was it about the story that made you feel the way you did? Write your answer on the lines below.

Scoring Guide — Responding to Literature
Explaining Responses to Literature

Emotional Responses
"Good Dog"
H-406000-B1B-2, 3
Age 13, Package 13, Exercise 6
Age 17, Package 13, Exercise 10

General Scoring Rationale: The responding to literature objective was formulated to address "deliberate, conscious kinds of interpretation." It was hoped that respondents would not only be aware of their feelings, but be confident about expressing them. Thus, a successful response would both identify an emotion and articulate the characters, events and ideas from the text that contributed to that emotion. Evidence can also be provided from personal experience, other works or special aspects of the construction of the text.

NOTE: Rating should, in general, be done by taking the entire student response into consideration without regard to what is actually written in the space provided for the first part and for the second part of the response. If reasons (substantial) are given in the first part they are valid. The same is true for emotions or feelings identified in the second part. Caution should, however, be used, as this often leads to a tendency to rewrite the responses. Categorizations should reflect, as closely as possible, what respondents actually wrote.

Scoring Guide Categories:

I. First Categorization — Identification and substantiation of personal emotions and feelings. This takes into account **both** open-ended parts.

1 = Unable to identify emotion or feeling. Respondents do not do the task. They refer to the text but do not answer even the first question. Examples are:

A. Some material is quoted from the text with no clear identification of the respondent's feeling or emotion.

B. An emotion expressed by a character is identified rather than the respondent's own feeling, for example: "The man was sad."

C. An observation about the story is made, such as: "The title is misleading."

2 = Emotion or feeling identified without substantiation. Respondents name something but cannot go on. They identify emotions and feelings but do not substantiate choice with evidence from the text. Respondents tend to provide: 1) circular evidence such as: "It's sad because it's sad"; 2) a copy or close paraphrase of the text; 3) vague reasons like: "The way it sounds," "The way the author wrote it," "The words used," "The way it is made"; or 4) only a subjective reaction as substantiation.

3 = Emotion or feeling identified and substantiated with minimal evidence. Respondents identify an emotion(s) or feeling(s) and substantiate their choice(s) with only one reason or piece of evidence related to the text.

A. Reason can be directly related to the text, for example: "It was sad because the dog died."

B. Reason can be inferred from the text, such as: "Sad because the dog was his only friend."

C. Reason can be inaccurate, if it is related to the text.

D. Reason can be based on personal experiences or opinions that are related to the text.

E. Reason can refer to (but not retell) specific places in the text, such as: "Because of what it says on the last paragraph."

NOTE: "Sorry for the dog" is identification of feeling/emotion. "Sorry the dog died" is identification and minimal substantiation.

4 = Emotion or feeling identified and substantiated. Respondents identify emotion(s) or feeling(s) and substantiate their choice(s) with **at least two** reasons or pieces of evidence related to the text. However, the evidence may be presented in an ambiguous fashion or be of the types described in 3C-3E. Reasons must be distinct — not instances of the same reasons as in "(Sad) because the dog was starving and hungry."

5 = Emotion or feeling identified and substantiated in a coherent fashion. Respondents identify emotion(s) or feeling(s) and substantiate their choice(s) with **at least two** reasons or pieces of evidence **clearly** related to the text — directly related or can be readily inferred. The reasons are presented logically and coherently.

NOTE: The following types of papers were classified as indicated and received no further scoring:

0 = No response.

7 = Illegible or illiterate.

8 = Totally off-task.

9 = "I don't know."

II. **Second Categorization** — The source of the evidence. Code presence or absence for each of the following:

1 = **Content.** The evidence is based on the content of the text, such as: "The way the dog was moping."

2 = **Form.** The evidence is based on the language, style or construction of the text.

3 = **Subjective reactions.** These are responses that judge the worth of all or part of the text, for example: "I don't like dog stories." "I hate to see a dog dead." "It was interesting." or "It was monotonous." Personal opinions about the actions of the characters or personal experiences may be stated, such as: "I had a dog that died" or references to the moral of the story or general philosophical statements may be made, such as: "Accept the death of your dog." or "Death is a mystery."

NOTE: Content and form can be present **only** if primary categorization is a "3" through "5"; subjective reactions can be present in papers categorized "2" through "5."

III. **Third Categorization** — A count of the number of reasons or pieces of evidence. Categorization for the count of details is as follows: (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7 or more). NOTE: This count only applies to papers with primary categorization of "3" through "5"; subjective reactions should not be counted as reasons or evidence.

3. One of These Days Exercise

Read the story which begins below and then answer the questions on the three pages following it.

One of These Days

Monday dawned warm and rainless. Aurelio Escovar, a dentist without a degree, and a very early riser, opened his office at six. He took some false teeth, still mounted in their plaster mold, out of the glass case and put on the table a fistful of instruments which he arranged in size order, as if they were on display. He wore a collarless striped shirt, closed at the neck with a golden stud, and pants held up by suspenders. He was erect and skinny, with a look that rarely corresponded to the situation, the way deaf people have of looking.

When he had things arranged on the table, he pulled the drill toward the dental chair and sat down to polish the false teeth. He seemed not to be thinking about what he was doing, but worked steadily, pumping the drill with his feet, even when he didn't need it.

After eight he stopped for a while to look at the sky through the window, and he saw two persistent buzzards who were drying themselves in the sun on the ridgepole of the house next door. He went on working with the idea that before lunch it would rain again. The shrill voice of his eleven-year-old son interrupted his concentration.

"Papa."

"What?"

"The Mayor wants to know if you'll pull his tooth."

"Tell him I'm not here."

He was polishing a gold tooth. He held it at arm's length, and examined it with his eyes half closed. His son shouted again from the little waiting room.

"He says you are, too, because he can hear you."

The dentist kept examining the tooth. Only when he had put it on the table with the finished work did he say:

"So much the better."

He operated the drill again. He took several pieces of a bridge out of a cardboard box where he kept the things he still had to do and began to polish the gold.

"Papa."

"What?"

His still hadn't changed his expression.

"He says if you don't take out his tooth, he'll shoot you."

Without hurrying, with an extremely tranquil movement, he stopped pedaling the drill, pushed it away from the chair, and pulled the lower drawer of the table all the way out. There was a revolver. "O.K.," he said. "Tell him to come and shoot me."

He rolled the chair over opposite the door, his hand resting on the edge of the drawer. The Mayor appeared at the door. He had shaved the left side of his face, but the other side, swollen and in pain, had a five-day-old beard. The dentist saw many nights of desperation in his dull eyes. He closed the drawer with his fingertips and said softly:

"Sit down."

"Good morning," said the Mayor.

"Morning," said the dentist.

While the instruments were boiling, the Mayor leaned his skull on the headrest of the chair and felt better. His breath was icy. It was a poor office: an old wooden chair, the pedal drill, a glass case with ceramic bottles. Opposite the chair was a window with a shoulder-high cloth curtain. When he felt the dentist approach, the Mayor braced his heels and opened his mouth.

Aurelio Escovar turned his head toward the light. After inspecting the infected tooth, he closed the Mayor's jaw with a cautious pressure of his fingers.

"It has to be without anesthesia," he said.

"Why?"

"Because you have an abscess."

The Mayor looked him in the eye. "All right," he said, and tried to smile. The dentist did not return the smile. He brought the basin of sterilized instruments to the worktable and took them out of the water with a pair of cold tweezers, still without hurrying. Then he pushed the spittoon with the tip of his shoe, and went to wash his hands in the washbasin. He did all this without looking at the Mayor. But the Mayor didn't take his eyes off him.

It was a lower wisdom tooth. The dentist spread his feet and grasped the tooth with the hot forceps. The Mayor seized the arms of the chair, braced his feet with all his strength, and felt an icy void in his kidneys, but didn't make a sound. The dentist moved only his wrist. Without rancor, rather with a bitter tenderness, he said:

"Now you'll pay for our twenty dead men."

The Mayor felt the crunch of bones in his jaw, and his eyes filled with tears. But he didn't breathe until he felt the tooth come out. Then he saw it through his tears. It seemed so foreign to his pain that he failed to understand his torture of the five previous nights.

Bent over the spittoon, sweating, panting, he unbuttoned his tunic and reached for the handkerchief in his pants pocket. The dentist gave him a clean cloth.

"Dry your tears," he said.

The Mayor did. He was trembling. While the dentist washed his hands, he saw the crumbling ceiling and a dusty spider web with spider's eggs and dead insects. The dentist returned, drying his hands. "Go to bed," he said, "and gargle with salt water." The Mayor stood up, said goodbye with a casual military salute, and walked toward the door, stretching his legs, without buttoning up his tunic.

"Send the bill," he said.

"To you or the town?"

The Mayor didn't look at him. He closed the door and said through the screen:

"It's the same thing."

Source Information: "One of These Days" from NO ONE WRITES TO THE COLONEL and Other Stories, by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, translated from the Spanish by J.S. Bernstein. Copyright © 1968 in the English translation by Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

A. How does the dentist feel toward the Mayor?

- ☐ Respectful and courteous
- ☐ Concerned and understanding
- ☐ Fearful and powerless
- ■ Resentful and bitter
- ☐ I don't know.

B. In the story the son and the dentist talk to one another.

"Papa."

"What?"

"The Mayor wants to know if you'll pull his tooth."

"Tell him I'm not here."...

"He says you are, too, because he can hear you."...

"So much the better."

Why did the dentist give this last response?

- ☐ Because he misunderstood his son's comment
- ☐ Because he wanted the Mayor to stop complaining about the pain
- ☐ Because he was embarrassed that the Mayor heard him
- ■ Because he wanted the Mayor to know he was lying
- ☐ I don't know.

C. Why did the Mayor keep his eyes on the dentist while the dentist was getting ready to pull the Mayor's tooth?

- ☐ Because the Mayor was impressed by the dentist
- ■ Because the Mayor did not trust the dentist
- ☐ Because the Mayor was following the instructions of the dentist
- ☐ Because the Mayor was waiting for the anesthetic
- ☐ I don't know.

D. What was the dentist's office like?

- ☐ Modern and sterile
- ■ Poor and untidy
- ☐ Unfurnished and dull
- ☐ Cheerful and comfortable
- ☐ I don't know.

E. What did the dentist mention while he was pulling the Mayor's tooth?

- ☐ The bill for the treatment
- ☐ The revolver hidden in the table drawer
- ■ The twenty dead men
- ☐ The buzzards outside the window
- ☐ I don't know.

F. Is this a good story?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

G. What was it about the story that led you to choose the answer you did in Question F? Write your answer on the lines below.

Scoring Guide — Responding to Literature Evaluating Literature

Applying Criteria to Evaluate Stories "One of These Days" H-420000-B1B-3 Age 17, Package 7, Exercise 5

General Scoring Rationale: Since the objective referring to the evaluation of written works states that "it is important that readers be able to articulate their criteria," respondents should explain the reasons or criteria for their evaluation. To be successful, responses should provide examples from the text that relate to those criteria. Plot summary can be viewed as minimal support for various criteria; however, the best papers should also consider such aspects of the text as setting, plot and character development, meaning/message, clarity of language, relevance or believability.

Scoring Guide Categories:

I. **First Categorization** — Presentation and elaboration of evidence.

1 = **No criteria or evidence given.** Respondent copies part of the text or gives a close paraphrase or circular response, such as: "It was good because it was good." "I liked it." "I didn't like it," or "I've heard it before." Nonsensical, or wildly inaccurate statements are given.

2 = **Gives a vague or unelaborated criterion.** A broad, sweeping generalization or personal assertion is made, which does not necessarily have to restate the phrase "It was good/bad—." This response almost could have been given in absence of having heard or read the story. It could apply to almost any story. It was—exciting, interesting, had a good plot, and so on (broad general adjectives).

3 = **Retells or gives summary or one vague criterion with synopsis as evidence.** The summary may refer to part or all of the story; it may be cryptic or lengthy and well written. This includes **any** citing of content of story (as long as it is not basically copying.)

4 = **Gives two or more unelaborated criteria.** Responses contain two or more generalizations or personal assertions. (These are longer "2s.")

5 = **Gives one criterion elaborated with evidence.** Respondent gives one criterion, generalization or personal assertion that is supported with evidence other than retelling or plot summary. It may or may not be accompanied by unelaborated criteria. (It was interesting because . . . respondent gives something other than plot summary.)

6 = **Gives two criteria elaborated with evidence.** Respondent gives two or more criteria, generalizations or personal assertions **at least two** of which are supported with evidence other than retelling or plot summary. These may or may not be accompanied by unelaborated criteria. NOTE: Once a paper meets the criteria listed for a "4," "5" or "6" it does not matter if that response is also accompanied by plot summary.

NOTE: The following types of papers were classified as indicated and received no further scoring:

0 = **No response.**

7 = **Illegible or illiterate.**

8 = **Totally off-task.**

9 = **"I don't know."**

II. **Second Categorization** — Basis of evidence. Code presence or absence for each of the following:

1 = **Content.** The evidence is based on the content of the text, for example: "Gives an idea of the old man's way of life."

2 = **Form.** The evidence is based on the language, style or construction of the text, for example: "It didn't seem to have a beginning or an end."

3 = **Subjective reactions.** These are responses that judge the worth of all or part of the text, or personal opinions about the actions of the characters, the believability of the plot, the moral of the story, or the genre, such as "I like fairy tales."

NOTE: Second categorization is only for papers with primary categorizations of "2" through "6."

4. Old Dog Exercise

Read the poem below and then answer the questions on the next two pages.

Old Dog

Toward the last in the morning she could not get up,
even when I rattled her pan.

I helped her into the yard, but she stumbled and fell. I
knew it was time.

The last night a mist drifted over the fields.

In the morning she would not raise her head — the far,
clear mountains we had walked surged back to mind.

We looked a slow bargain: our days together were the
ones we had already had.

I gave her something the vet had given, and patted her
still, a good last friend.

Source Information: "Old Dog" p. 205 in STORIES THAT COULD BE TRUE by William Stafford. Copyright © 1971 by William Stafford. Reprinted by permission of Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

A. How much did you like reading this poem?

1 ☐ I liked it very much.
☐ I liked it.
2 ☐ I can't decide.
3 ☐ I disliked it.
☐ I disliked it very much.

NOTE: This version with 5 foil options was administered only to age 13; at age 9, only the 3 middle foil values were administered. For analysis purposes, the 5 options were combined and renumbered as indicated.

B. How does the person in the poem feel about the death of the old dog?

- ■ The person accepts the dog's death.
- □ The person feels angry.
- □ The person feels afraid.
- □ The person has no feeling about the dog's death.
- □ I don't know.

C. How is death described in the poem?

- □ As violent and tragic
- □ As sudden and shocking
- ■ As natural and peaceful
- □ As unfamiliar and strange
- □ I don't know.

D. What emotions and feelings did you have when you read this poem? Describe your feelings in a few words on the line below.

E. What was it about the poem that made you feel the way you did? Write your answer on the lines below.

Scoring Guide — Responding to Literature
Explaining Responses to Literature

Emotional Responses
"Old Dog"
H-465000-B1B—1, 2
Age 9, Package 5, Exercise 7
Age 13, Package 5, Exercise 4

General Scoring Rationale: The responding to literature objective was formulated to address "deliberate, conscious kinds of interpretation." It was hoped that respondents would not only be aware of their feelings, but be confident about expressing them. Thus, a successful response would both identify an emotion and articulate the characters, events and ideas from the text that contributed to that emotion. Evidence can also be provided from personal experience, other works or special aspects of the construction of the text.

NOTE: Rating should, in general, be done by taking the entire student response into consideration without regard to what is actually written in the space provided for the first part and for the second part of the response. If reasons (substantial) are given in the first part they are valid. The same is true for emotions or feelings identified in the second part. Caution should, however, be used, as this often leads to a tendency to rewrite the responses. Categorizations should reflect, as closely as possible, what respondents actually wrote.

Scoring Guide Categories:

I. First Categorization — Identification and substantiation of personal emotions and feelings. This takes into account **both** open-ended parts.

1 = Unable to identify emotion or feeling. Respondents do not do the task. They refer to the text, but do not answer even the first question. Examples are:

A. Some material is quoted from the text with no clear identification of the respondent's feeling or emotion.

B. An emotion expressed by a character is identified rather than the respondent's own feeling, for example: "The man was sad."

C. An observation about the story is made: "The title is misleading."

2 = Emotion or feeling identified without substantiation. Respondents name something but cannot go on. They identify emotion(s) and feeling(s) but do not substantiate choice(s) with evidence from the text. Responses tend to provide: 1) circular evidence such as: "It's sad because it's sad"; 2) a copy or close paraphrase of the text; 3) vague reasons like "The way it sounds," "The way the author wrote it," "The words used," "The way it is made"; or 4) only a subjective reaction as substantiation.

3 = Emotion or feeling identified and substantiated with minimal evidence. Respondents identify emotion(s) or feeling(s) and substantiate their choice(s) with **only one** reason or piece of evidence related to the text.

A. Reason can be directly related to the text, for example: "It was sad because the dog died."

B. Reason can be inferred from the text, for example: "Sad because the dog was her only friend."

C. Reason can be inaccurate, if it is related to the text.

D. Reason can be based on personal experiences or opinions that are related to the text.

E. Reason can refer to (but not retell) specific places in the text, such as: "Because of what it says in the last paragraph."

NOTE: "Sorry for the dog" is identification of feeling/emotion. "Sorry the dog died" is identification and minimal substantiation.

4 = Emotion or feeling identified and substantiated. Respondents identify emotion(s) or feeling(s) and substantiate their choice(s) with **at least two** reasons or pieces of evidence related to the text. However, the evidence may be presented in an ambiguous fashion or be of the types described in 3C-3E. Reasons must be distinct — not instances of the same reasons as in "(Sad) because the dog was aged and old."

5 = Emotion or feeling identified and substantiated in a coherent fashion. Respondents identify emotion(s) or feeling(s) and substantiate their choice(s) with **at least two** reasons or pieces of evidence **clearly** related to the text — directly related or can be readily inferred. The reasons are presented logically and coherently.

NOTE: The following types of papers were classified as indicated and received no further scoring:

0 = No response.

7 = Illegible or illiterate.

8 = Totally off-task.

9 = "I don't know."

II. Second Categorization — The source of the evidence. Code presence or absence of each of the following:

1 = Content. The evidence is based on the content of the text, for example: "About the mist over the field."

2 = Form. The evidence is based on the language, style or construction of the text.

3 = Subjective reactions. These are responses that judge the worth of all or part of the text, such as: "I don't like dog stories," "I hate to see a dog dead," "It was interesting," or "It was monotonous." Personal opinions about the actions of the characters or personal experiences may be stated, such as: "I had a dog that died" or references to the moral of the story or general philosophical statements are made, such as: "Accept the death of your dog," or "Death is a mystery."

III. Third Categorization — A count of the number of reasons or pieces of evidence. Categorization for the count of details is as follows: (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7 or more). NOTE: This count **only** applies to papers with primary categorization of "3" through "5"; subjective reactions should not be counted as reasons or evidence.

5. Mother to Son Exercise

Read the poem below and then answer the questions on the next two pages.

Mother to Son

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare
But all the time
I'se been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps.
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I se still goin', honey,
I's still climbin'
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

Source Information: "Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes. Copyright © 1926 by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. and renewed 1954 by Langston Hughes. Reprinted from SELECTED POEMS OF LANGSTON HUGHES, by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

A. How does the mother talk to her son?

- ☐ Angrily
- ■ Encouragingly
- ☐ Jokingly
- ☐ Hopelessly
- ☐ I don't know

B. This exercise part was not included in analysis because no single correct response was identifiable.

C. Is this a good poem?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ No

D. What was it about the poem that led you to choose the answer you did in Question C? Write your answer on the lines below.

Scoring Guide — Responding to Literature Evaluating Literature

Applying Criteria to Evaluate Poems "Mother to Son"
H-467000-B1B-2, 3
Age 13, Package 9, Exercise 7
Age 17, Package 9, Exercise 8

General Scoring Rationale: Since the objective referring to the evaluation of written works states that "it is important that readers be able to articulate their criteria," respondents should explain the reasons or criteria for their evaluation. To be successful, responses should provide examples from the text that relate to those criteria. Plot summary can be viewed as minimal support for various criteria; however, the best papers should also consider such aspects of the text as setting, plot and character development, meaning/message, clarity of language, relevance or believability.

Scoring Guide Categories:

I. First Categorization — Presentation and elaboration of evidence.

1 = No criteria or evidence given. Respondent copies part of the text or gives a close paraphrase or circular response, for example: "It was good because it was good," "I liked it," "I didn't like it," or "I've heard it before." Nonsensical, or wildly inaccurate statements are given.

2 = Gives a vague or unelaborated criterion. A broad, sweeping generalization or personal assertion is made which does not necessarily have to restate the phrase "It was good/bad—." This response almost could have been given in absence of having heard or read the poem. It could apply to almost any poem. It was — exciting, interesting, had a good plot, and so on (broad general adjectives).

3 = Retells or gives summary or one vague criterion with synopsis as evidence. The summary may refer to part or all of the poem; it may be cryptic or lengthy and well written. This includes **any** citing of content of poem (as long as it is not basically copying).

4 = Gives two or more unelaborated criteria. Responses contain two or more generalizations or personal assertions. (These are longer "2s.")

5 = Gives one criterion elaborated with evidence. Respondent gives one citerion, generalization or personal assertion that is supported with evidence other than retelling or plot summary; it may or may not be accompanied by unelaborated criteria. (It was interesting because...; respondent gives something other than plot summary.)

6 = Gives two criteria elaborated with evidence. Respondent gives two or more criteria, generalizations or personal assertions at least two of which are supported with evidence other than retelling or plot summary; these may or may not be accompanied by unelaborated criteria. NOTE: Once a paper meets the criteria listed for a "4," "5" or "6" it does not matter if that response is also accompanied by plot summary.

NOTE: The following types of papers were classified as indicated and received no further scoring:

0 = No response.

7 = Illegible or illiterate.

8 = Totally off-task.

9 = "I don't know."

II. Second Categorization — Basis of evidence. Code presence or absence for each of the following:

1 = Content. The evidence is based on the content of the text, for example: "It was about the crystal stair."

2 = Form. The evidence is based on the language, style or construction of the text, for example: "There was so many misspelled words" or "Poems are supposed to rhyme."

3 = Subjective reactions. These are responses that judge the worth of all or part of the text, or give personal opinions about the actions of the characters, the believability of the plot, the moral of the poem, or the genre, such as: "I like poetry."

NOTE: Second categorization is **only** for papers with primary categorizations of "2" through "6."

6. I Was You Exercise

Read the poem below. Then write an essay about an important idea or theme of the poem. In your essay tell how such things as the images, events, sound and structure contribute to this idea or theme. We are interested in what you have to say, not your spelling and punctuation. Write your essay on the lines provided on the next two pages. You will have 9 minutes to read the poem and write your response.

I was you
i smiled
your smile
till my mouth
was set
and my face
was tight
and it wasn't right
it was wrong
i was you baby
i was you too long

i said
your words
till my throat
closed up
and i had
no voice
and i had
no choice
but to do your song
i was you baby
i was you too long

i lived
your life
till there was
no me
i was flesh
i was hair
but i wasn't there
it was wrong
i was you baby
i was you too long
and baby baby
the worst thing
to it
is that you let me
do it
so who was weak
and who was strong
for too long baby

Source Information: "i was you" from ON MY WAY TO WHERE by Dori Previn published by Saturday Review Press, 1972. Used by permission of the publisher.

Scoring Guide — Responding to Literature
Analyzing Literature

"I was you"
H-469000-B1B-3
Age 17, Package 5, Exercise 8

General Scoring Rationale: The objectives state that students should be able to turn to a text and attend to special aspects, such as the stylistic conventions employed, the format, structure or areas of multiple meaning. A successful analysis goes beyond interpretation, providing a theme or meaning, and discusses in what way particular features — images, sounds, events and structure — of the poem contribute to the theme.

Scoring Guide Categories:

1 = No analysis. These responses only evaluate the poem or its features or make empty or glancing references to various features. Examples are: "All and all this poem was pretty and I enjoyed it," "It did have a lot of phrases that rhymed," "The poem presented poor images and events," "The structure was catchy." or "The sound is your singing a song."

Some category "1" responses do include brief allusions to the poem. However, these mentions of text are not considered synopsis. Also, wildly inaccurate interpretations of the poem and nonsensical responses should be placed in this category.

2 = Synopsis. These responses mainly retell or summarize the poem. Although some may include evaluations and empty or glancing references to other features, sometimes a brief synopsis can be embedded in an evaluation. If so, place it in category "2." The same is true of some references to images. When the meaning of an image is not given, but part of the poem is repeated, then the response can be placed in category "2." Also, responses that include glancing references to a number of features including **events** should be placed in this category. In summary, a "2" response at least retells, summarizes, or refers to particular parts of the poem. However, it does little else of substance in terms of analyzing the poem.

3 = Theme. These responses state an idea or theme of the poem, but do little of substance. They do not include synopsis or relevant discussions of other features. Some may include evaluations, glancing references to features, or "philosophizing" about their theme that is not particularly relevant to the poem. In other words, some "3" responses may go off on tangents (initiated by the theme) which are not text based. A paper with no theme statement, but a substantive statement of one feature other than events should also be placed in this category. For example: "An image is given." Some themes are: "It presented the idea of weakness in people," "The basic idea of the poem is how love hurts when misused or mishandled," "The theme is that you should not try to be somebody else," or "Always be your own person."

With a poem in particular, the difference between "synopsis" and "theme" is often a fine distinction. Yet the basic difference is whether or not the idea/message is stated as a generalization. Synopsis can involve hypotheses about meaning yet this is usually interpretation not generalization, for example: "I think it means he she lost his her identity." Also, some "3" responses elaborate their generalization to the point of directly referring to parts of the poem, such as: "By living by someone else s feelings, views, likes, and dislikes, talks and walks, you do not have an identity of your own." However, these should still be placed in category "3."

4 = Minimal evidence of analysis. Some of these responses state an idea or theme of the poem and relate events in the poem (plot summaries may be quite thin). References to specific parts of the text qualify as synopsis. Other responses placed in this category discuss **at least two** features, one can be events (synopsis), in a substantive manner — however, there is no statement of theme.

5 = Evidence of analysis. These responses state an idea or theme of the poem and include a substantive statement about **at least one** feature other than events (synopsis). For example, the structure might be discussed, such as: "The short lines and the choice of words suggest that this person is still not himself" or "The structure of this poem brought a melody of music, as though it were the lyrics of a soft-spoken song of tearful anger." These responses may also include synopsis or any of the other characteristics of papers placed in categories "1-4." However, the major drawback with category "5" papers is that they may be brief (include only one substantive statement), or, if they do include discussions of several features, the features explained or even elaborated do not all relate or refer back to the idea/theme proposed in the response. The relationship between the stated theme or idea of the poem and the discussion of the features is not explicit or even readily implicit.

6 = Integrated analysis. These responses state an idea/theme and discuss **at least two** features, one can be events (synopsis), in a substantive manner. They often have the components of "5" papers, yet the discussion of the features does relate to the proposed idea/theme. These are coherent, organized responses.

NOTE: The following types of papers were classified as indicated and received no further scoring:

0 = No response.
7 = Illegible or illiterate.
8 = Totally off-task.
9 = "I don't know."

7. What Makes a Good Story Exercise

What makes a good story? List three things on the lines below.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Scoring Guide — Responding to Literature Evaluating Literature

Qualities of Good Literature "Good Story" H-841000-B1B-1, 2, 3 Age 9, Package 11, Exercise 4 Age 13, Package 14, Exercise 5 Age 17, Package 10, Exercise 5

Scoring Guide Categories:

I. First Categorization — Description of type of qualities listed.

0 = No response.

1 = Relationship between form and content. Respondents may state that the dialogue is compatible with the topic, for example.

2 = Content. Respondents may refer to one or more of the following types of content: mystery, westerns, fantasy, adventure, danger, action, humor, suspense, romance, drama, any reference to theme, or excitement.

3 = Form. Respondents mention some aspect of form, such as: high point, strong words, vivid language, suspenseful beginning, length, style, construction of the text, or happy ending.

4 = Subjective reaction. Respondents give a statement to the effect that a good story should evoke a subjective reaction to one of the following types: sensible, interesting, intelligent, funny, imaginative, dramatic, suspenseful, or adventurous.

5 = Unelaborated features of genre. Respondents refer to one of the following characteristics: plot, character, setting — with or without redundant "good."

6 = Naming of a specific story or author. Respondents list a particular title or author.

7 = Undetermined or circular. These are responses where you cannot determine whether the quality is one of content or form, or the answer is circular, for example: the writer, author, good author, good literature, good writing, good words, the title, the ending, language, or good subject.

8 = References to format. Respondents list some quality related to format, for example: neatness, commas, quotation, indentations, capital letters, summary, controlling idea, or has a title.

9 = Other. Responses are totally off task, illegible, illiterate, "I don't know," or other nonsense.

II. Second Categorization — Level of the qualities listed.

1 = Identifies characteristics of work as a whole. Responses refer to sex, violence, human adventure, catchy title, dialogue, plot, or setting.

2 = Analyzes the way the text works. Respondent states ideas, such as: use of foreshadowing or irony, sentences are to the point, the tension rises, enthusiastic words are used, surprise ending is effective.

3 = Makes statements about the meaning or theme. Respondent makes statements, such as: "It makes me think"; "It has a good moral"; "It expresses your feelings"; or "It has meaning, meaningfulness."

NOTE: This categorization **only** applies to papers rated "1" through "5" for the first categorization.

8. What Makes a Good Poem Exercise

What makes a good poem? List three things on the lines below.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Scoring Guide — Responding to Literature Evaluating Literature

Qualities of Good Literature "Good Poem" H-842000-B1B-1, 2, 3 Age 9, Package 10, Exercise 8 Age 13, Package 8, Exercise 10 Age 17, Package 8, Exercise 8

Scoring Guide Categories:

I. First Categorization — Description of type of qualities listed.

0 = No response.

1 = Relationship between form and content. Respondents may state the rhyme pattern is compatible with the topic, for example.

2 = Content. Respondents may refer to one or more of the following types of content: mystery, westerns, fantasy, adventure, danger, action, humor, suspense, romance, drama, any reference to theme, or excitement.

3 = Form. Respondents mention some aspect of form, such as: good rhyme, high point, strong words, vivid language, suspenseful beginning, length, style, construction of the text, or happy ending.

4 = Subjective reaction. Respondents give a statement to the effect that a poem should evoke a subjective reaction of one of the following types: sensible, interesting, intelligent, funny, imaginative, dramatic, suspenseful, or adventurous.

5 = Unelaborated features of genre. Respondents refer to one of the following characteristics: plot, character, setting — with or without redundant "good."

6 = Naming of a specific poem or poet. Respondents list a particular poem or poet.

7 = Undetermined or circular. These are responses where you cannot determine whether the quality is one of content or form, or the answer is circular, for example: poet, good poet, good literature, good writing, good words, the title, the ending, language, or good subject.

8 = References to format. Respondents list some quality related to format, for example: neatness, commas, quotation, indentations, capital letters, summary, controlling idea, or has a title.

9 = Other. Responses are totally off task, illegible, illiterate, "I don't know," or other nonsense.

II. Second Categorization — Level of the qualities listed.

1 = Identifies characteristics of work as a whole. Responses refer to sex, violence, human adventure, catchy title, dialogue, good rhythm, plot, or setting.

2 = Analyzes the way the text works. Respondent states ideas, such as: use of foreshadowing or irony, the tension rises, enthusiastic words are used, or surprise ending is effective.

3 = Makes statements about the meaning or theme. Respondent makes statements, such as: "It makes me think"; "It has a good moral"; "It expresses your feelings"; or "It has meaning, meaningfulness."

NOTE: This categorization **only** applies to papers rated "1" through "5" for the first categorization.

9. Check Exercise

You are going to be asked to write a composition about a poem. I will read the poem to you as you read it to yourself. When we have read the poem carefully, write a composition in which you discuss the poem. We are more interested in what you have to say than in how well you say it. Put the title of the poem at the top of the next page.

Check

The Night was creeping on the ground!
She crept and did not make a sound,

Until she reached the tree: And then
She covered it, and stole again

Along the grass beside the wall!
—I heard the rustling of her shawl

As she threw blackness everywhere
Along the sky, the ground, the air,

And in the room where I was hid!
But, no matter what she did

To everything that was without
She could not put my candle out!

So I stared at the Night: And she
Stared back solemnly at me!

James Stephens

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Scoring Guide—Responding to Literature

General Responding
"Check"
4-200005-22B-2
Age 13, Package 10, Exercise 8

General Scoring Rationale: There are several major ways to deepen understanding of a written work. Respondents can use awareness of emotional impact, personal experience and knowledge of other works to interpret, provide meaning, evaluate and analyze the text. A content analysis of the responses not only provides information about which internal resources respondents tend to draw upon to help their understanding of written works, but also the cognitive skills they choose to demonstrate when given an opportunity to respond freely. It is expected that the results may be highly text dependent. Also, the better responses should move beyond plot summary and retelling to provide meaning, evaluation and particularly analysis.

Scoring Guide Categories:

Descriptive information: Code each type as present or absent. Code one type as predominant.

EG = Egocentric. Responses are not text based, but are text relevant. Respondent writes a letter or poem of his own or writes another poem (or excerpts) that he has memorized. Other types of statements categorized here are: "I never read poetry," "I'm not good with poems," or "A check on a piece of paper because he got the answer wrong."

PR = Personal. Respondent identifies with characters, makes judgments about actions of characters or gives advice, for example: "I feel that the poet is right." Also, statements are made such as: "I like poems about nature," "I wish I could write a poem like that," or "This is not my kind of poem."

EM = Emotional. Respondent attributes emotions to the text or makes a direct statement of emotion, for example: "The poem was sad," "It's touching," "It had a funny feeling," "It was very dramatic," "It was a spooky poem," or "It was a mysterious poem."

RT = Retelling. Respondent summarizes or paraphrases the poem (or parts of it) using specific words from the poem. Respondent gives a synopsis, overview of brief description of the poem or part(s) of it. (Disregard inaccuracies.)

IN = Inferencing. Respondent goes beyond the text and provides motivations for characters.

GN = Generalization. Respondent attributes meanings to the poem, such as: "You shouldn't close your mind to anything unknown," or "It means that the world is suddenly a check of darkness."

AN = Analysis. Respondent discusses the language or structure of the poem, for example: "The poem doesn't rhyme," "The poem seems more like a story," "The night seemed like a witch," "It could have more details and not so many long words," "The author makes the night sound like a real person you could reach out and touch," "I didn't see any misspelled words," or "It wasn't long enough."

OW = Other works. Respondent classifies the work as to genre or type. Respondent compares the poem to other works or art forms, such as: "It's not like a poem I've seen before," "I think it's a good soap opera," or "It was like a mystery."

EV = Evaluation. Respondent judges the worth of the work, for example: "It was stupid," "I don't like it," "I didn't understand it," "It doesn't make sense," "It is nicely written," "It was not exciting or sad," or "It has no meaning."

NOTE: In addition to the papers which were considered ratable (1 = ratable) and which were analyzed using the categories described above, some papers were not considered ratable and these were placed in one of the following classifications:

0 = No response.
2 = Nonratable. Copies or circular.
7 = Illegible, illiterate.
8 = Totally off-task.
9 = "I don't know."

10. Into My Heart Exercise

Write a composition in which you discuss this poem. We are more interested in what you have to say than in how you say it.

Into my heart an air that kills
From yon far country blows:
What are those blue remembered hills,
What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content,
I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went
And cannot come again.

A.E. Housman, 1890

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Scoring Guide — Responding to Literature

General Responding
"Into My Heart"
4-200008-22B-3
Age 17, Package 10, Exercise 10

General Scoring Rationale: There are several major ways to deepen understanding of a written work. Respondents can use awareness of emotional impact, personal experience and knowledge of other works to interpret, provide meaning, evaluate and analyze the text. A content analysis of the responses not only provides information about which internal resources respondents tend to draw upon to help their understanding of written works, but also the cognitive skills they choose to demonstrate when given an opportunity to respond freely. It is expected that the results may be highly text dependent. Also, the better responses should move beyond plot summary and retelling to provide meaning, evaluation and particularly analysis.

Scoring Guide Categories:

Descriptive information: Code each type as present or absent. Code one type as predominant.

EG = Egocentric. Responses are not text based, but are text relevant. Respondent writes a letter or poem of his own or writes another poem (or excerpts) that he has memorized. Other types of statements categorized here are: "I never read poetry," "I'm not good with poems," or "I love the beach — it helps me put my mind off things."

PR = Personal — analytic. Respondent gives personal reactions to content in an **analytic** sense — identification with characters, judgments about actions of characters and advice giving, observations about the way society should/does work. Respondent states, for example: "I might have felt the same thing," "It describes my feelings of moving to a new state," or "I feel that the poem is right by talking about the real problems of air pollution facing us."

X = Personal — global. Respondent gives personal reactions to genre and content in a **global** sense. Examples would be statements of the following type: "I like poems about nature," "I can relate to this poem," "I wish I could write poems like this," or "This is not my kind of poem."

EM = Emotional. Respondent attributes emotions or feelings of mood to the text or makes a direct statement of emotion. Examples would include: "The poem was sad," "It's touching," "It had a funny feeling," "It was very dramatic," "It gave a happy point of view," or "The ending makes you feel sorry for him."

RT = Retelling. Respondent summarizes or retells the poem or part(s) of it. This can include statements referencing specific words or lines. (Disregard inaccuracies.)

IN = Inferencing. Respondent goes beyond the text and provides motivations for characters or develops action. It includes text-based hypotheses of what did happen or predictions about what will happen, for example: "The author is longing for the home he once had," or "A. E. Housman seems to be talking about a country that has been badly damaged or destroyed."

GN = Generalization. Respondent derives general meanings from the poem, such as: "Inside a man's heart live his fondest memories."

AN = Analysis — superficial. Respondent mentions **superficial** characteristics of the text. This includes concerns about format, for example: "The poem doesn't rhyme," "The poem seems more like a story," "It doesn't give the place and time," "The author uses imaginative language," or "There is a sense of lost beauty in the poem."

Y = Analysis — elaborated. Respondent gives an **elaborated** or substantive discussion of any one of the following special features or literary devices: plot, characters, setting, images, sounds, and so on. Included here are discussions of plot veracity and meaningfulness, such as: "Even though Housman wrote this poem in 1890, it is still pertinent and meaningful today," or "Each of us has memories of places and people we would like to relive, but which time will not allow us to."

OW = Other works — general. Respondent classifies the work as to genre or type and compares the poem to other types of works or art forms in **general**, such as: "It's not like a poem I've seen before," or "It is like a myth."

Z = Other works — specific. Respondent compares the poem to a **specific** work which is mentioned by title, such as: "The **Bible** describes heaven this way."

EV = Evaluation. Respondent judges the worth of the work. This also includes such statements as: "It is stupid," "I didn't like it," "It doesn't make sense," "It is nicely written," or "It is imaginative."

NOTE: In addition to the papers which were considered ratable (1 = ratable) and which were analyzed using the categories described above, some papers were not considered ratable and these were placed in one of the following classifications:

0 = No response.
2 = Nonratable. Copies or circular.
7 = Illegible, illiterate.
8 = Totally off-task.
9 = "I don't know."

11. As The Cat Exercise

Here is a poem about which you are going to be asked two questions. I will read the poem to you as you read it to yourself. When we have read the poem carefully, I will read you the first question and you are fill in the oval beside the answer you think best. Then I will read the second question to you and you are to write your answer in the answer space.

As the cat
climbed over
the top of

the jamcloset
first the right
forefoot

carefully
then the hind
stepped down

into the pit of
the empty
flowerpot

William Carlos Williams

Source Information: "Poem" from William Carlos Williams, COLLECTED EARLIER POEMS. Copyright © 1938 by New Directions Publishing Corporation. Reprinted by permission of New Directions.

A. Which of the following do you think the poet is really doing?

- ☐ He is worried about the cat.
- ☐ He is being mad at the cat.
- ☐ He is being sad about the cat.
- ■ He is describing the cat's movements.
- ☐ I don't know.

B. What are your reasons for choosing your answer to question A?

Scoring Guide—Responding to Literature Explaining Responses to Literature

Inferencing
"As the Cat"
4-202002-22B-1
Age 9, Package B, Exercise 11

General Scoring Rationale: Since the responding to literature objective was formulated to address "deliberate, conscious kinds of interpretation," a successful response not only should identify the nature, meaning or purpose of the poem but also should explain the given interpretation by relating it to the text. Evidence can be given by citing specific events in the text or special aspects of the construction of the text.

Scoring Guide Categories:

I. First Categorization—Substantiation of choice of foil in multiple choice part of exercise.

2 = Choice is unsubstantiated. Responses tend to provide: 1) circular evidence, such as: "It was boring"; 2) copying of the text with or without minor inaccuracies; 3) vague reasons such as: "The way it sounds," "The way the author wrote it," "The words used," "The way it is made," "Because he show the movements," "He was worried about the cat," "Because he was talking about the cat's movements," "It sounds like the cat's movements," "It sounds like what happened in the poem," and so on; or 4) only a subjective reaction as substantiation.

3 = Choice substantiated with minimal evidence. Respondents substantiate their choice(s) with **only one** reason or piece of evidence related to the text.

A. Reason can be directly related to the text, for example: "Because he told the cat's every movement"; "Because he show the movement"; "Telling how the cat movements was"; "He is telling what the cat's movements are"; "Because he did something"; "That's because the cat is doing"; or "Because he has the words jamcloset, forefoot, hind."

B. Reason can be inferred from the text, for example: "Because the cat jumped around."

C. Reason can be inaccurate, if it is related to the text, for example: "Worried, because the cat might fall" or "Because the cat was lost."

D. Reason can be based on personal experience that is related to the text, such as: "He worried because your mom worries about you when you are not there."

E. Reason can refer to (but not retell) specific places in the text, such as: "Because of what it says in the last paragraph."

4 = Choice substantiated. Respondents substantiate their choice(s) with **at least two** reasons or pieces of evidence related to the text. However, the evidence may be presented in an ambiguous fashion or be of the types described in 3C-3E, such as: "Because he is telling how he is moving and how fast," "William is telling how he is jumping and running," "First the cat put the right forefoot out and then carefully the hind stepped down," or "The poet is describing the cat's movement in how the cat is doing." Reasons must be distinct—not instances of the same reason. It may take, for example, two bits of information to make a single point, such as: "He describes the cat's movements when he is going in the flowerpot," "Forefoot and then the hind steps down," or "He is describing the cat's movements. What he is doing."

5 = Choice substantiated in a coherent fashion. Respondents substantiate their choice(s) with **at least two** reasons or pieces of evidence related to the text. In addition, the reasons are presented logically and coherently, and are **clearly** related to the text, such as: "It tells all about how he got down from the jamcloset and landed in the flowerpot."

NOTE: The following types of papers were classified as indicated and received no further scoring:

6 = No response.

7 = Illegible or illiterate.

8 = Totally off-task.

9 = "I don't know."

NOTE: There is no score point 1 for this exercise.

II. **Second Categorization**—The source of the evidence. Code presence or absence for each of the following:

1 = Content. The evidence is based on the content in the text.

2 = Form. The evidence is based on the language, style or construction of the text.

3 = Subjective reactions. Some responses judge the worth of all or part of the text, for example: "I dislike poetry" or "It was interesting." Personal opinions about the actions of the characters are stated or references to the moral of the story or general philosophical statements: "Keep trying."

NOTE: Content and form can be present **only** if primary categorization is a "3" through "5"; subjective reactions can be present in papers categorized "2" through "5."

III. **Third Categorization**—A count of the number of reasons or pieces of evidence. Categorization for the count of details is as follows: (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7 or more). NOTE: This count **only** applies to papers with primary categorization of "3" through "5"; subjective reactions should not be counted as reasons or evidence.

12. Rodeo Exercise

Here is a poem about which you are going to be asked two questions. I will read the poem aloud as you read it to yourself. When we have read the poem carefully, I will read you the first question and you are to fill in the box beside the answer you think best. Then I will read the second question to you and you are to write your answer in the answer space.

The Closing of the Rodeo

The lariat snaps; the cowboy rolls
His pack, and mounts and rides away.
Back to the land the cowboy goes.

Plumes of smoke from the factory sway
In the setting sun. The curtain falls,
A train in the darkness pulls away.

Goodbye, says the rain on the iron roofs.
Goodbye, say the barber poles.
Dark drum the vanishing horses' hooves.

William Jay Smith

Source Information: "The Closing of the Rodeo." Reprinted from NEW AND SELECTED POEMS by William Jay Smith. Copyright © 1947, 1970 by William Jay Smith and used by permission of the publisher, Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence.

A. Which of the following do you think describes the mood of this poem?

- ☐ Angry
- ☐ Cheerful
- ☐ Humorous
- ■ Sad
- ☐ I don't know.

B. What are your reasons for choosing your answer to question A?

Scoring Guide—Responding to Literature Explaining Responses to Literature

Inferencing—Mood
"Rodeo"
4-202024-22B-2, 3
Age 13, Package 7, Exercise 11
Age 17, Package 7, Exercise 9

General Scoring Rationale: Since the responding to literature objective was formulated to address "deliberate, conscious kinds of interpretation," a successful response not only should identify the mood but also should explain the given interpretation by relating it to the text. Evidence can be given by citing specific events in the text or special aspects of the construction of the text.

Scoring Guide Categories:

I. First Categorization—Substantiation of mood.

2 = Mood is unsubstantiated. Respondents do not substantiate their choice(s) with evidence from the text. Responses tend to provide: 1) circular evidence such as: "It was sad because it was sad"; 2) a copy or close paraphrase of the text; 3) vague reasons like "The way it sounds," "The way the author wrote it," "The words used," "The way it is made," and so on; or 4) only a subjective reaction as substantiation.

3 = Mood substantiated with minimal evidence. Respondents substantiate their choice(s) of mood with **only one** reason or piece of evidence related to the text.

A. Reason can be directly related to the text, such as: "It was sad, because he was all alone."

B. Reason can be inferred from the text, such as: "Sad, because the cowboy lost the rodeo."

C. Reason can be inaccurate, if it is related to the text, such as: "Humorous, because the cowboy rolls" or "Sad, because of pollution."

D. Reason can be based on personal experience that is related to the text.

E. Reason can refer to (but not retell) specific places in the text, such as: "Because of what it says in the last paragraph." NOTE: "The way he read it" is not a reason, since it is not related to the text.

4 = Mood substantiated. Respondents substantiate their choice(s) of mood with **at least two** reasons or pieces of evidence related to the text. However, the evidence may be presented in an ambiguous fashion or be of the types described in 3C-3E. Reasons must be distinct—not instances of the same reason. It may take, for example, two bits of information to make a single point such as: "(Sad) because he liked to be in the rodeo, but it was over."

5 = Mood substantiated in a coherent fashion. Respondents substantiate their choice(s) of mood with **at least two reasons** or pieces of evidence **clearly** related to the text—directly related, or can be readily inferred. The reasons are presented logically and coherently.

NOTE: The following types of papers were classified as indicated and received no further scoring:

0 = No response.

7 = Illegible or illiterate.

8 = Totally off-task.

9 = "I don't know."

NOTE: There is no score point 1 for this exercise.

II. Second Categorization—The source of the evidence. Code presence or absence for each of the following:

1 = Content. The evidence is based on the content in the text, for example: "Everything got dark."

2 = Form. The evidence is based on the language, style or construction of the text, for example: "It has slow, low talk."

3 = Subjective reactions. These are responses that judge the worth of all or part of the text, for example: "I dislike poetry," "It was interesting," or "It was monotonous." Personal opinions about the actions of the characters are stated or references to the moral of the story or general philosophical statements, such as: "Keep trying."

NOTE: Content or form can be present **only** if the primary categorization is a "3" through "5"; subjective reactions can be present in papers categorized "2" through "5."

III. Third Categorization—A count of the number of reasons or pieces of evidence. Categorization for the count of details is as follows: (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7 or more). NOTE: This count **only** applies to papers with primary categorization of "3" through "5"; subjective reactions should not be counted as reasons or evidence.

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